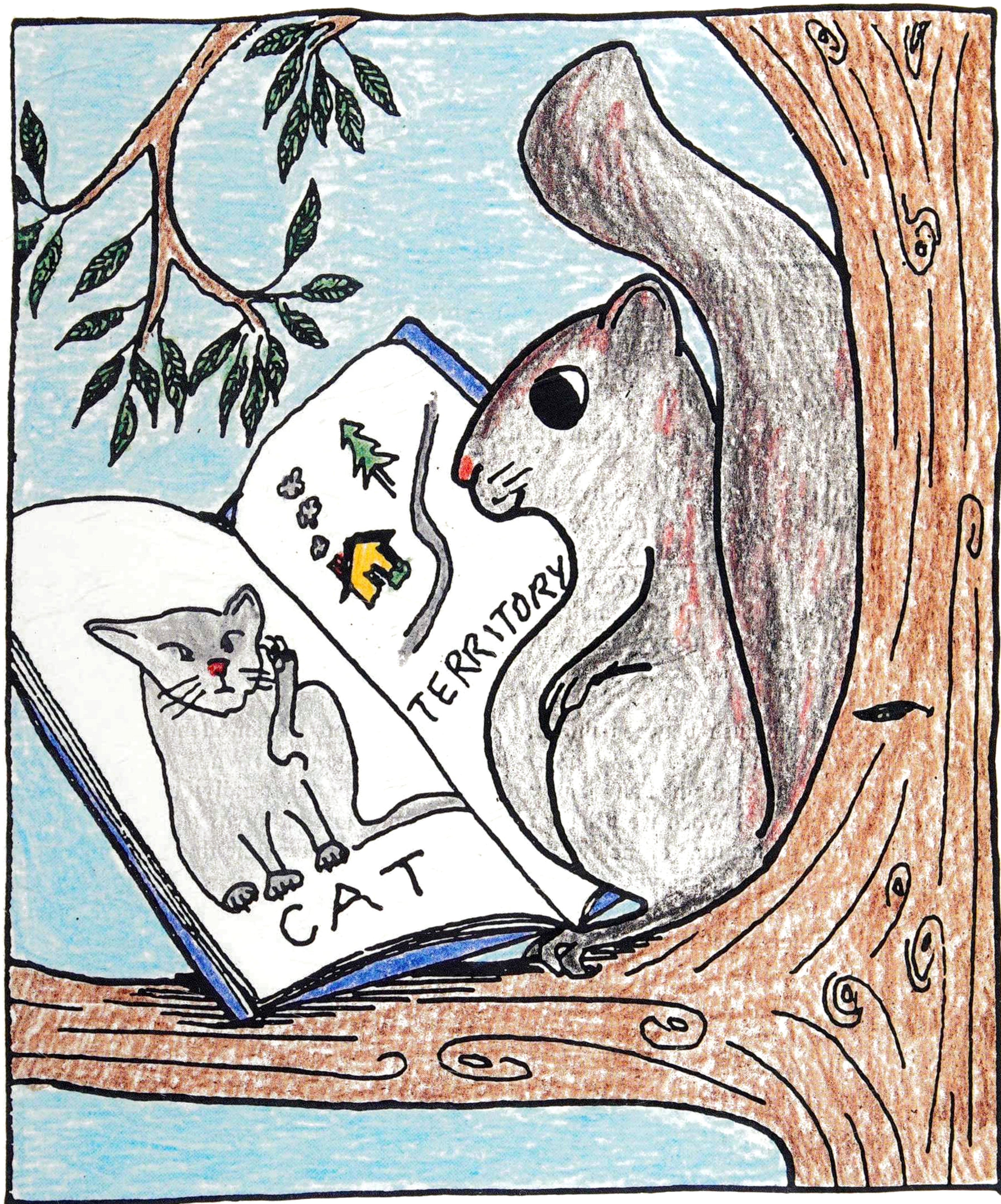


# A COURSE IN ADVANCED SQUIRRELLY SEMANTICS:

## A COLORING BOOK FOR SOME ADULTS



by D. David Bourland, Jr., and Elizabeth J. Bourland







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## CONTENTS

|                                              |     |
|----------------------------------------------|-----|
| Dedication                                   | vii |
| Introductory Comments                        | 1   |
| I. Time-binding                              | 2   |
| II. The Cat-Territory Analogy                | 6   |
| III. Non-Identity                            | 8   |
| IV. Non-Allness                              | 10  |
| V. Self-Reflexiveness                        | 12  |
| VI. Extensional Devices                      | 14  |
| VII. Elementalism and Non-Elementalism       | 18  |
| VIII. Multiordinality                        | 20  |
| IX. Multi-valued Orientation                 | 22  |
| X. Extension and Intension                   | 24  |
| XI. E, Non-E; N, Non-N: Geometry and Physics | 26  |
| XII. Abstracting                             | 28  |
| XIII. Consciousness of Abstracting           | 30  |
| XIV. The Structural Differential             | 32  |
| XV. A Final Note                             | 34  |
| References                                   | 37  |







Dedicated to the memory of:

- Alfred Korzybski, general semanticist, educator
- M. Kendig, general semanticist, educator
- Warren Jagush, father, educator
- Delphus Bourland, father
- Harry Holtzman, artist, educator
- George K. Zipf, socio-logician, educator







## INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS

We like cats, dogs, and squirrels. Not always in that same ... uh, order. It did not occur to us that we could use these generally charming space-binders to illustrate the principal formulations of general semantics. Instead, the pesky (if cuddly) little devils recently began intruding into our semantic configurations. Thank heavens! Had we tried consciously to "dream up" this material, we would most likely have herniated quite a few neurons.

Well, they have teamed up to help us produce this very brief guided tour through the basic facets of general semantics. If any reader regards our approach as foolishly light-hearted, we suggest just ignoring us and turning attention to the references given at the end. *Lots of attention!*

Perhaps our furry friends will help some of our non-furry colleagues to see some of the errors of their Aristotelian ways. Then again...



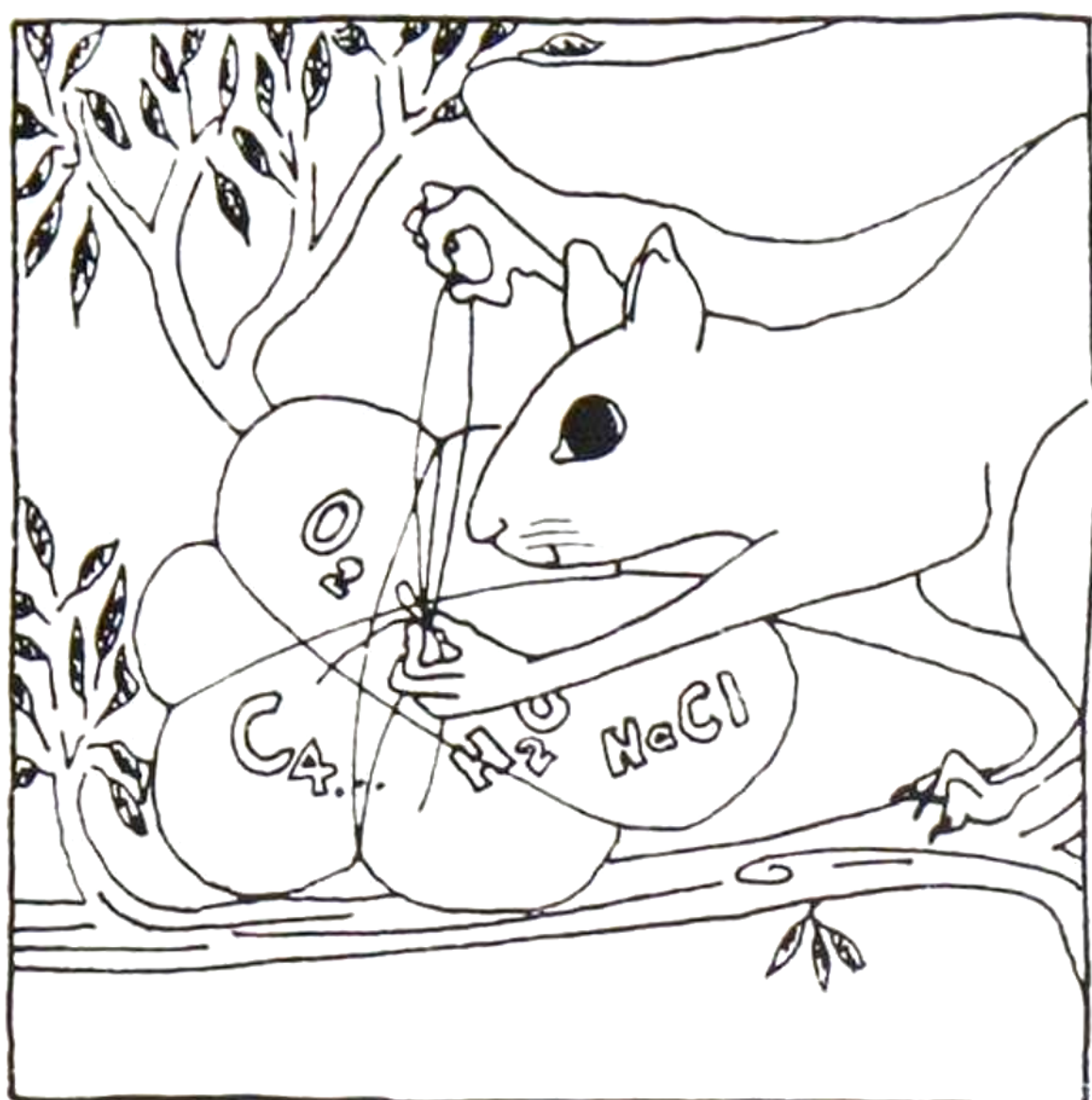
## I. TIME-BINDING

In 1921 Alfred Korzybski presented a new kind of definition of "humanity." (1) He called it a *functional* definition, basing it on unique human capabilities rather than reasoning which proceeds from, as he put it, either a zoological basis ("an animal *plus* something") or a mythological basis ("an angel *minus* something"). (1, p. 86ff)

After first observing that plants combine the minerals, moisture, sunlight, etc., in their immediate environment to make it possible for them to live, Korzybski characterized them as belonging to a *chemistry-binding* class of life. Animals, having an ability to enhance their possibilities of survival by moving about, he allocated to a *space-binding* class of life. Finally (you probably guessed), Korzybski recognized the unique ability of humans to act over various periods of time through the use of symbols, and hence he assigned humans to a *time-binding* class of life.

Korzybski explored some of the major consequences that result from the time-binding definition of humanity. (i) Important ethical implications stem from the clear-cut, dimensional discrimination between animals and humans. (ii) Emphasis becomes focussed on the importance of the symbolic means whereby each generation can potentially begin where the preceding one left off, without the need to re-invent every "wheel." These "symbolic means" include speech, writing systems, mathematical notations, etc. (iii) In order to operate effectively, time-binding requires a high degree of structural correspondence between language processes and the non-language processes described, which Korzybski went on to explore and explicate in his subsequent work. (2, 3)

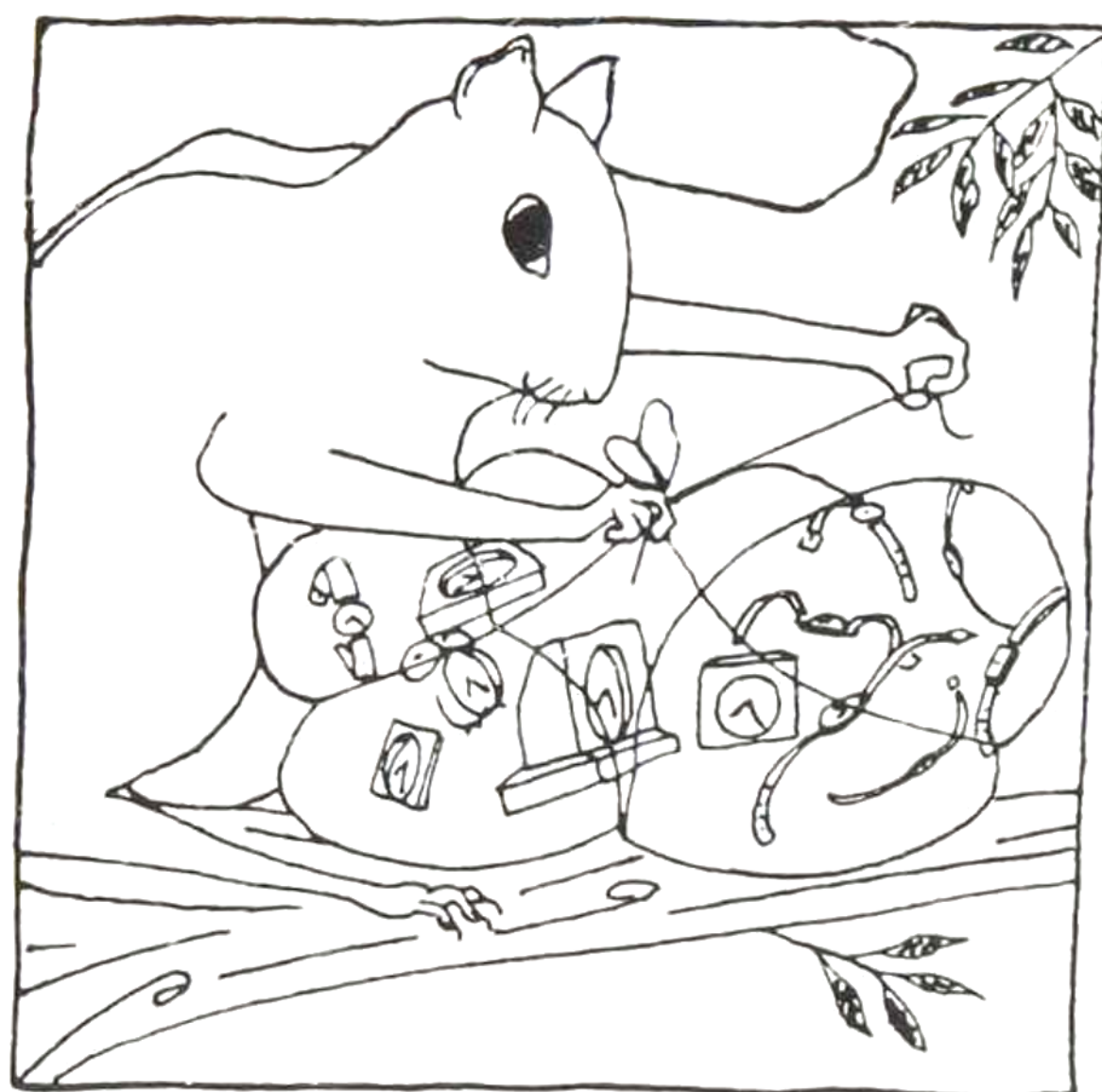




Chemistry - Binding



Space - Binding

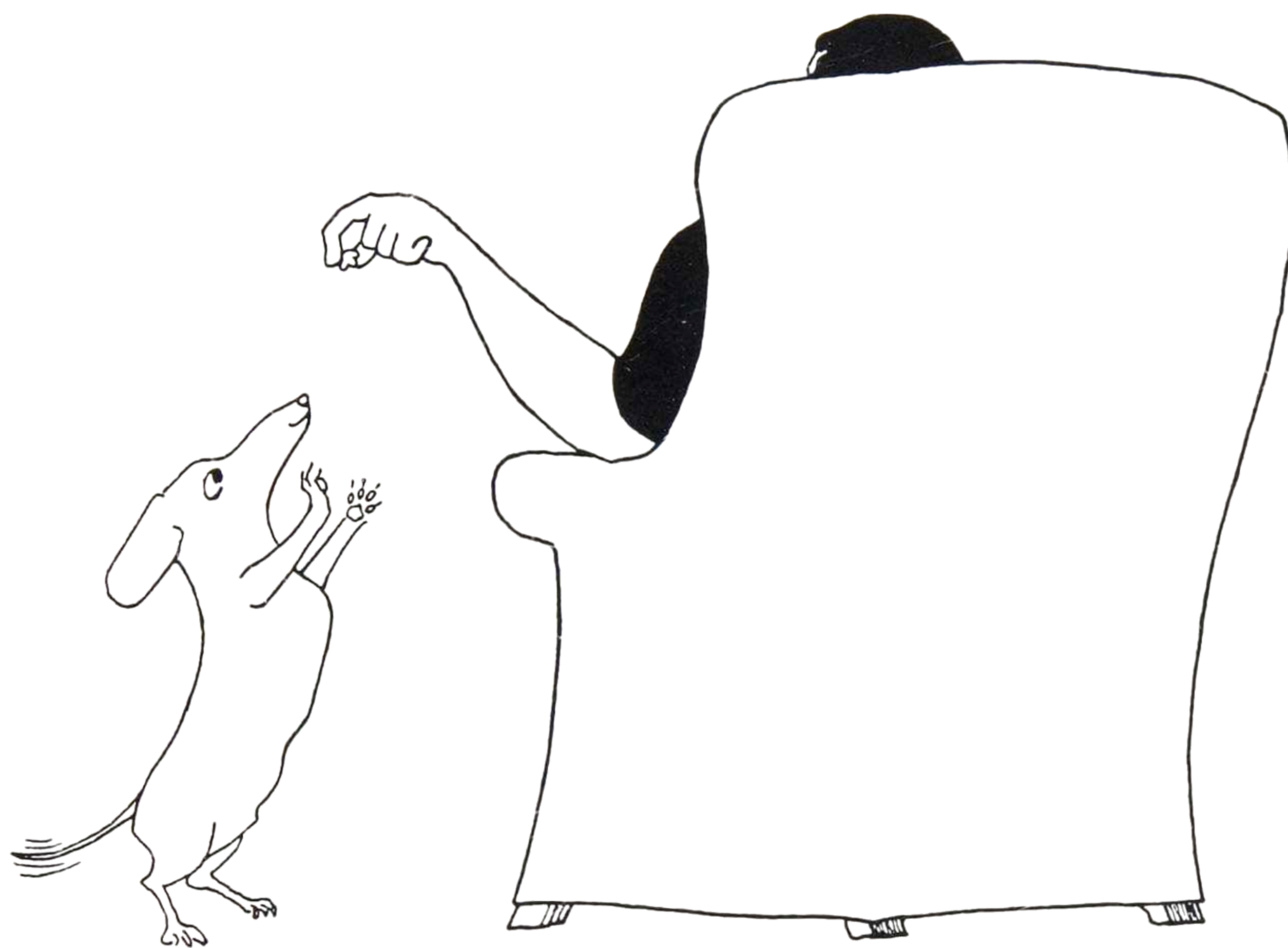


Time - Binding



... then, in the case of some others:





Our dog, Schnapps, belongs to a popcorn-binding class of life.



## II. THE CAT-TERRITORY ANALOGY

As a gentle lead into the "Non-Aristotelian Laws" of non-identity, non-allness, and self-reflexiveness, Korzybski formulated his famed "Map-Territory Analogy." Herewith a slightly modified version: (i) A "map" belongs to a level of abstraction *different* from that of the "territory" it represents. (ii) A "map" does not contain *a//* the structural characteristics of the associated "territory." (iii) A "map" may self-reflexively contain a "map" of higher order that shows the relation between the "territory" represented in some detail to the surrounding "territory." (4, p. 69) For our purposes here, we prefer to illustrate these matters in terms of the problems of squirrels and cats, with no disrespect intended.

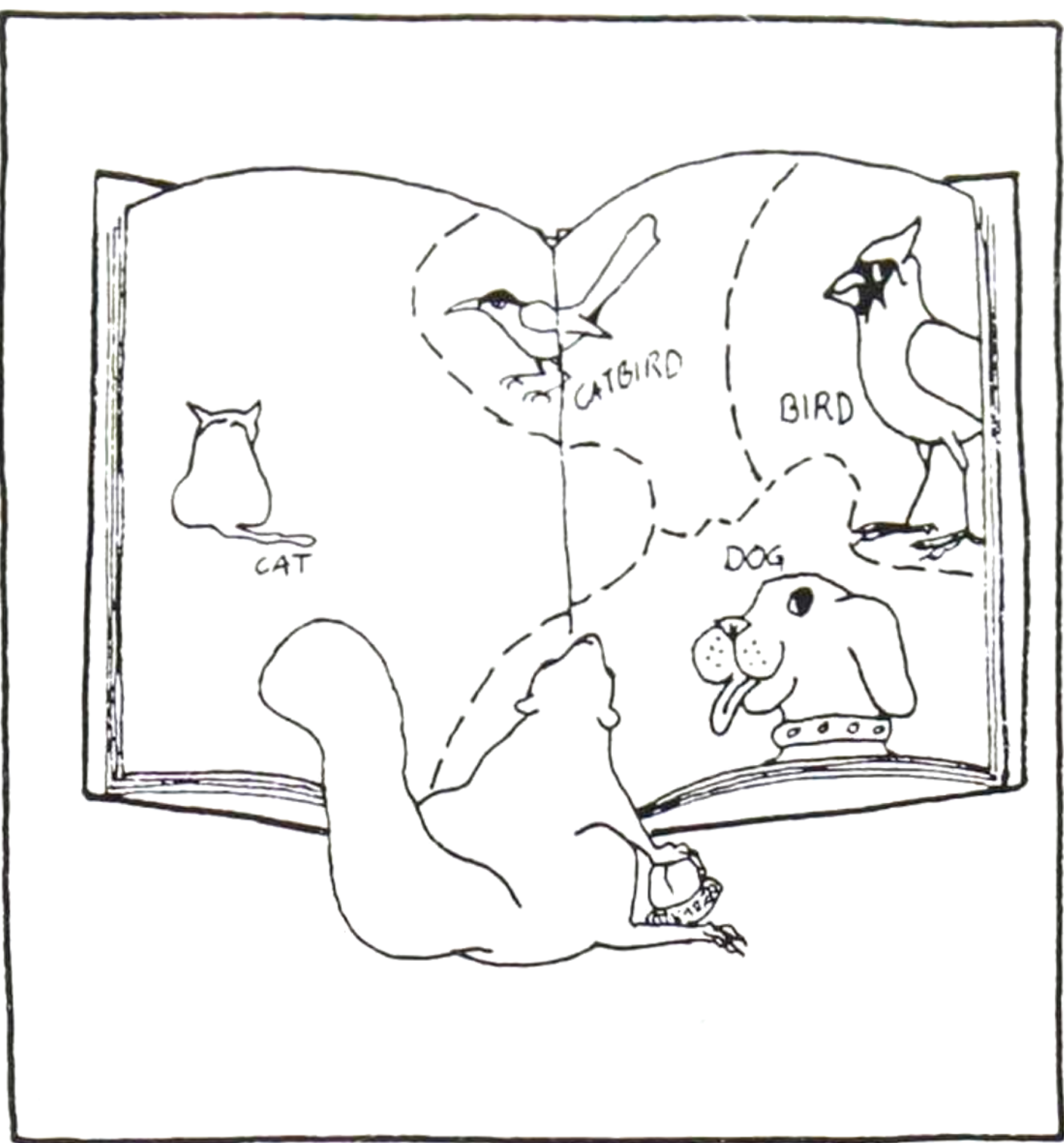
"The old dictum that we '*are*' animals leaves us hopeless, but if we merely *copy* animals in our nervous responses, we can stop it, and the hopeless becomes very hopeful, provided we can discover a *physiological* difference in these reactions. Thus we are provided with a definite and promising program for an investigation....

"The result of this enquiry turned out to be a non-aristotelian system, the first to be formulated, as far as I know, and the first to express the very scientific tendency of our epoch, which produced the non-euclidean and non-newtonian (Einstein's and the newer quantum theories) systems. It seems that these three, the non-aristotelian, non-euclidean, and non-newtonian systems are as much interwoven and interdependent as were the corresponding older systems." (2, p. 7f) We will return to these matters in Section XI below.





The cat is not the territory.



The cat does not own all the territory.



Watch out for cats of lower order!

# THE CAT - TERRITORY ANALOGY



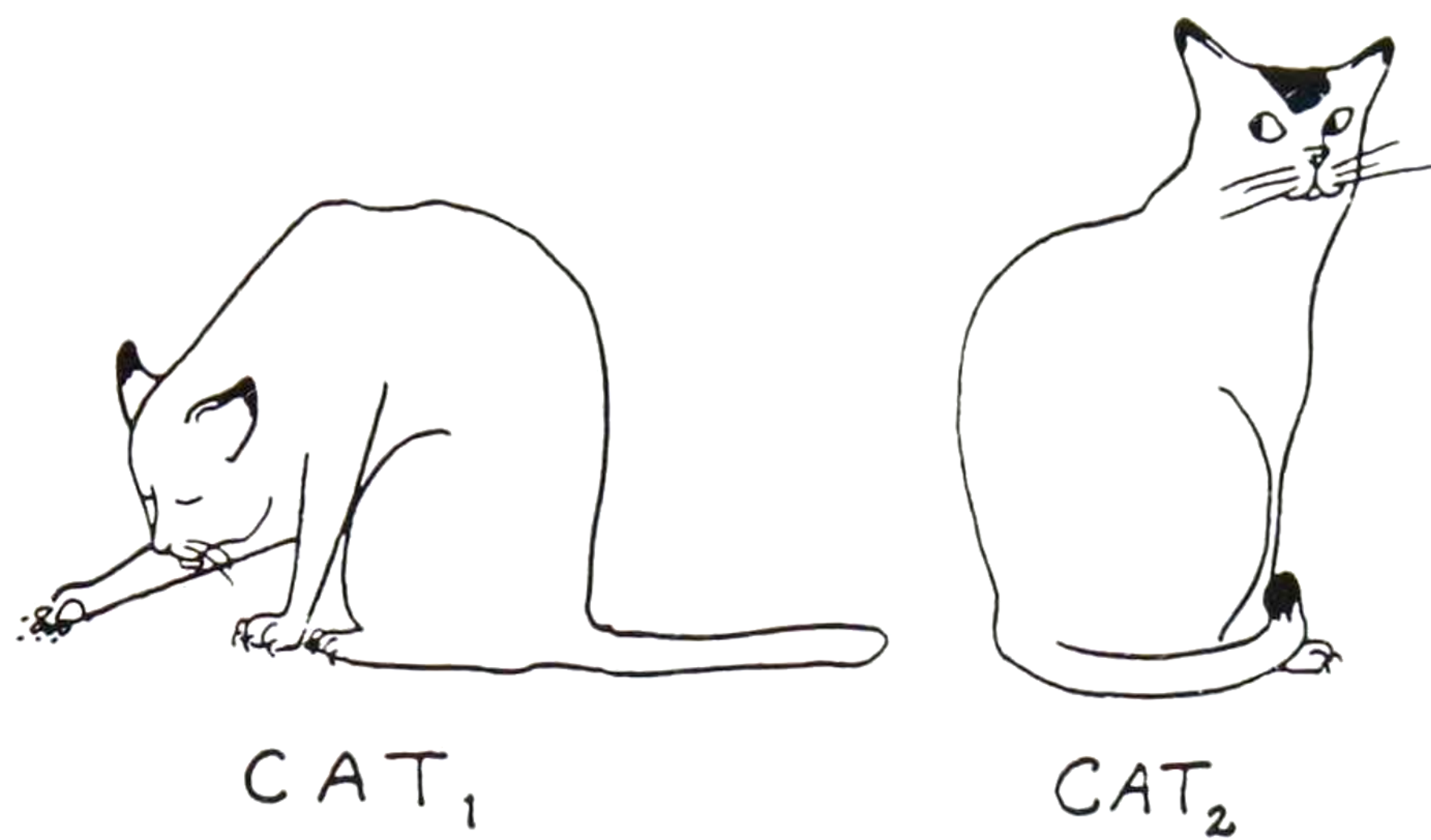
### III. NON-IDENTITY

Korzybski called Non-Identity the first non-Aristotelian law, due to its central importance in developing his non-Aristotelian revision. He regarded identification as the heart of our Aristotelian heritage, a heritage that carried us far and then, in our more modern and complex times, increasingly disturbs our semantic reactions. Furthermore, half or more of our sentences conventionally tend to suffer from identification and elementalism through the use of the verb "to be," which provides implications, if not outright assertion, of identification on the symbolic level.

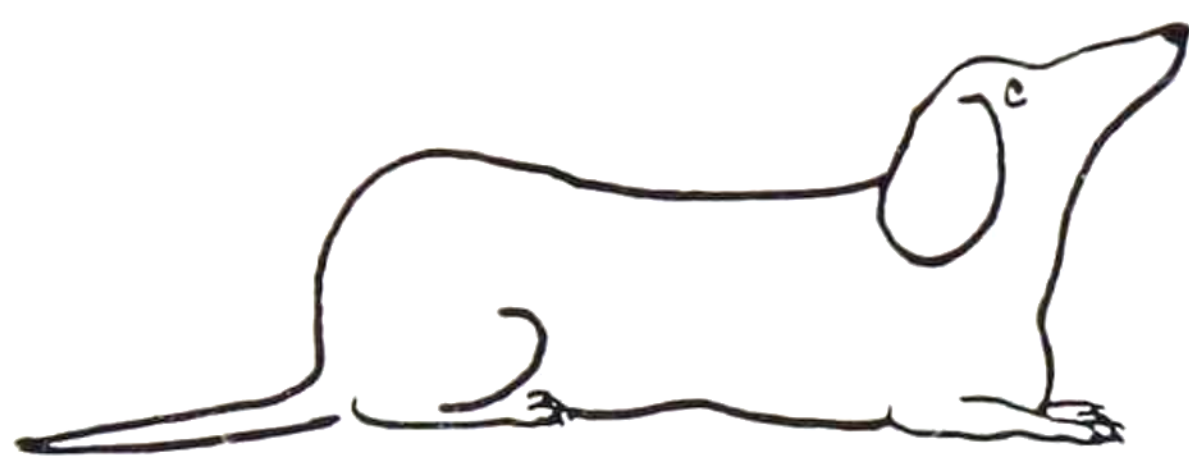
Korzybski wrote that, "We live in a world in which non-identity is as entirely general as gravitation, and so *every identification* is found to be in some degree a mis-evaluation. In a four-dimensional world where 'every geometrical point has a date,' even an electron at different dates is not identical with itself." (2, p. xxxiv) We have heard that at early seminars given by the Institute of General Semantics, some students complained that the atomic nature of the "real world" only amounted to a theory. Following the explosive happenings of August, 1945, these criticisms appeared no more.

We can distinguish between three fundamental aspects of non-identity: *uniqueness, dynamic fluctuations, and level-to-level, order-to-order distinctions*. (1) When we behave toward one individual *as if* he or she had an identity relation with some other individual, we violate the uniqueness principle. (2) When we behave toward an individual *today, as if* he or she had not changed since the original time of the evaluation, we violate the dynamic fluctuations principle. (3) When we engage in stereotyping or adopt rigid prejudice patterns, we fail to distinguish properly between different levels of abstraction; cases of ethnic name-calling usually give examples of confusions in orders of abstraction.

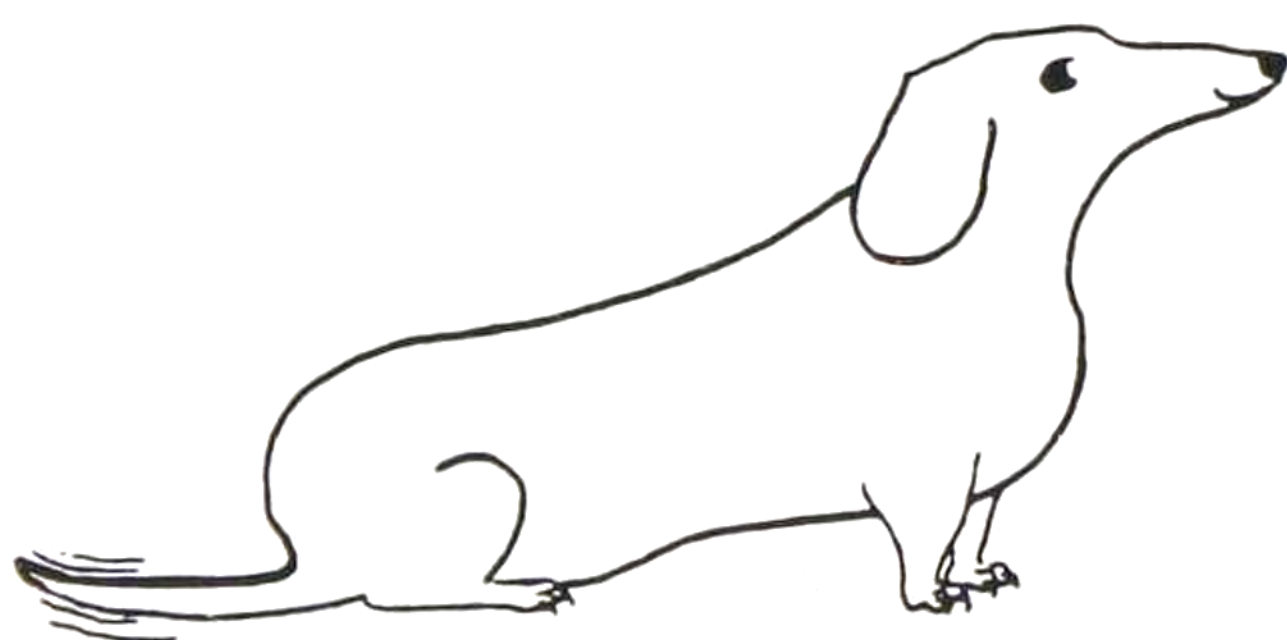




WHO COULD IDENTIFY  
CAT<sub>1</sub> WITH CAT<sub>2</sub>?



WHO COULD IDENTIFY  
CAT<sub>1</sub><sup>1993</sup> WITH CAT<sub>1</sub><sup>1991</sup>?



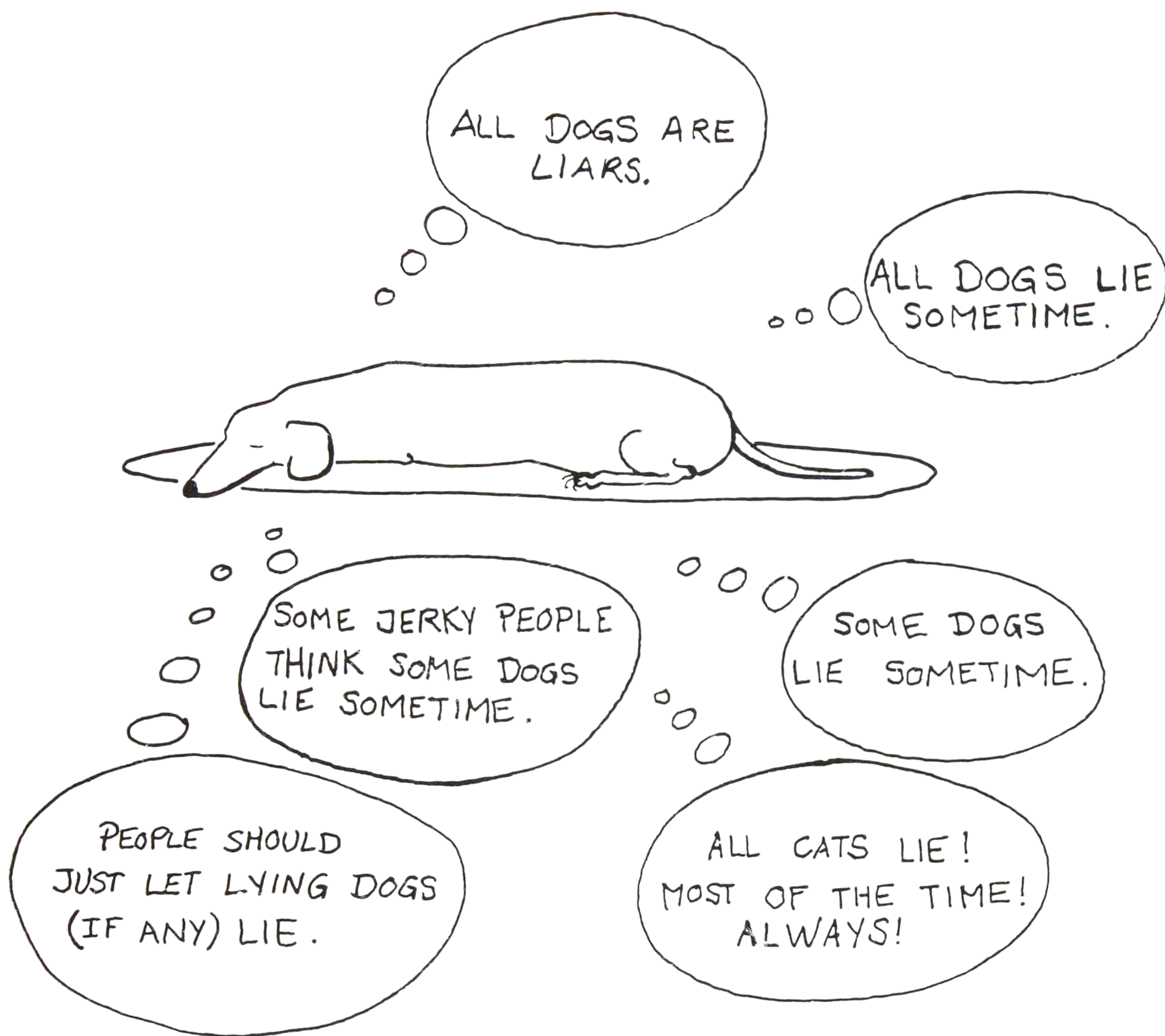


#### IV. NON-ALLNESS

"Allness" lies at the foundation of many logical paradoxes and, more importantly, of many instances of what Dr. Albert Ellis has called, "self-suggested nonsense" that can hamper our realizing our potentials. Werner Heisenberg's Indeterminacy Principle and Kurt Goedel's Incompleteness Theorem provide examples from physics and mathematics, respectively, of Korzybski's Non-Allness law: One cannot *say* all about the characteristics of an object, situation, fact, feeling.

Training in non-allness helps us to become sensitive to language processes in everyday life that can seriously lead us astray. Certain words act as warning flags in this regard: "all" (of course), "every," "always," "never," and other such elements of dogmatic statements. This caution applies to large sets of people, places, etc. Obviously, one could make a reasonable statement about "all the dogs in this room," but without such qualifiers as "in this room," one would court the fallacy that Bertrand Russell called "illegitimate totalities."







## V. SELF-REFLEXIVENESS

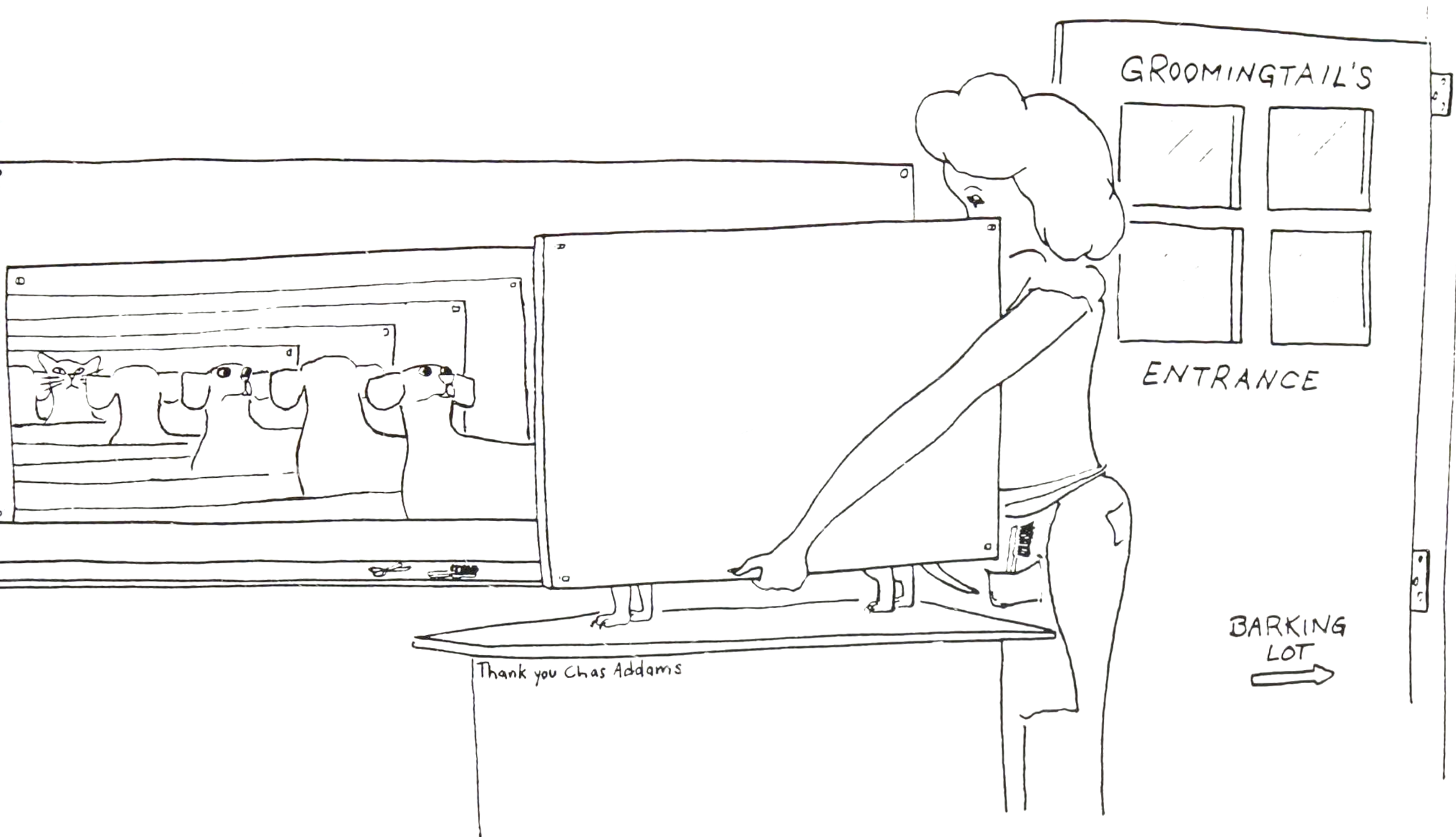
Korzybski wrote that, "An ideal map would contain the map of the map, the map of the map of the map, etc., endlessly. This characteristic was first discovered by Royce. We may call it self-reflexiveness.

"Language also has self-reflexive characteristics. We use language to speak about language, which fact introduces serious verbal and semantic difficulties, solved by the theory of *multiordinality*." (2, p. 751) We address the matter of multiordinality in Section VIII.

Self-reflexiveness, combined with strong doses of allness, lies behind many seemingly logical paradoxes. We have long heard the famous one concerning the barber who shaved everyone in the village who did not shave himself: who shaved the barber? One also finds paradoxes in many problems that involve infinite regress.

In his discussion of the inadequacy of such slogans as "the customer is always right," particularly when applied to education, Wendell Johnson commented that it "leads to tremendous confusion, conflict, and generally infantile personalities. It shows itself in a resentment of criticism, touchiness, a high degree of insultability, all of which makes for tensions, ill temper, selfishness, and a general lack of serenity. ... What lies behind it is a relative lack of consciousness of abstracting, little or no awareness of the continuous, personal, projective, self-reflexive, multiordinal character of the abstracting process at its best, by means of which we achieve individual growth and social progress." (5, p. 161f)







## VI. THE EXTENSIONAL DEVICES

Korzybski developed a group of "extensional devices" to "change the structure of language without changing the language itself." These consist of indexes, chain indexes, dates, hyphens, quotation marks, and the use of the etc.

- Etc. reflects and reminds us of the impossibility of saying *a//* about anything in the "real world."
- The quotation marks alert us to the possible difficulties associated with some symbols when used in some contexts, such as "real world" in the previous sentence.
- The hyphen provides a technique to improve the symbols representing complex circumstances, such as "psycho-physiological" and "space-time."
- Indexes and dates make it possible to specify, when needed, the uniqueness and time-dependence of whatever the symbols represent.
- Chain-indexes supply a method for keeping hierarchical matters sorted out.

Korzybski's students tend to create additional extensional devices, usually to good effect. Some regard the syntactical-lexical procedure of removing the verb "to be" from the English language as a further extensional device. We call the result of that operation "E-Prime."  
(4)





Indexing... and Dating



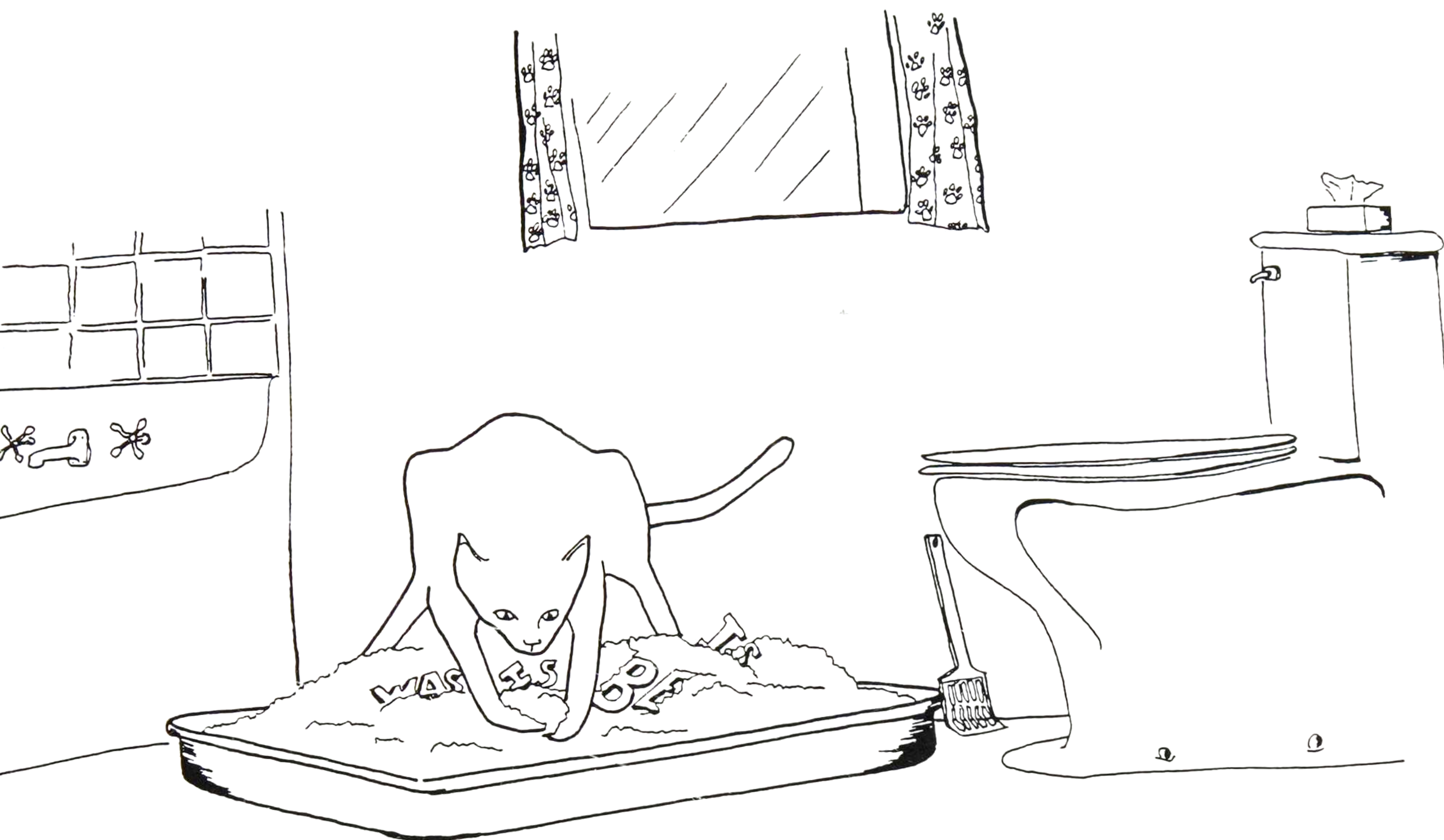
vi. The Extensional Devices continued

THE EXTENSIONAL DEVICE OF E-PRIME

"The subject-predicate form, the 'is' of identity, and the elementalism of the Aristotelian system are perhaps the main semantic factors in need of revision, as they are found to be the foundation of the insufficiency of this system and represent the mechanism of semantic disturbances, making general adjustment and sanity impossible." — Alfred Korzybski (2, p. 371)

"By adopting E-Prime, we accomplish the first two ... [revisions] called for by Korzybski, *at one stroke*." (4, p. 64) Through seriously hampering the use of the passive voice, E-Prime also contributes to a lowering of the general level of elementalism, for the passive usually involves an elementalistic construction. (4, p. xv)



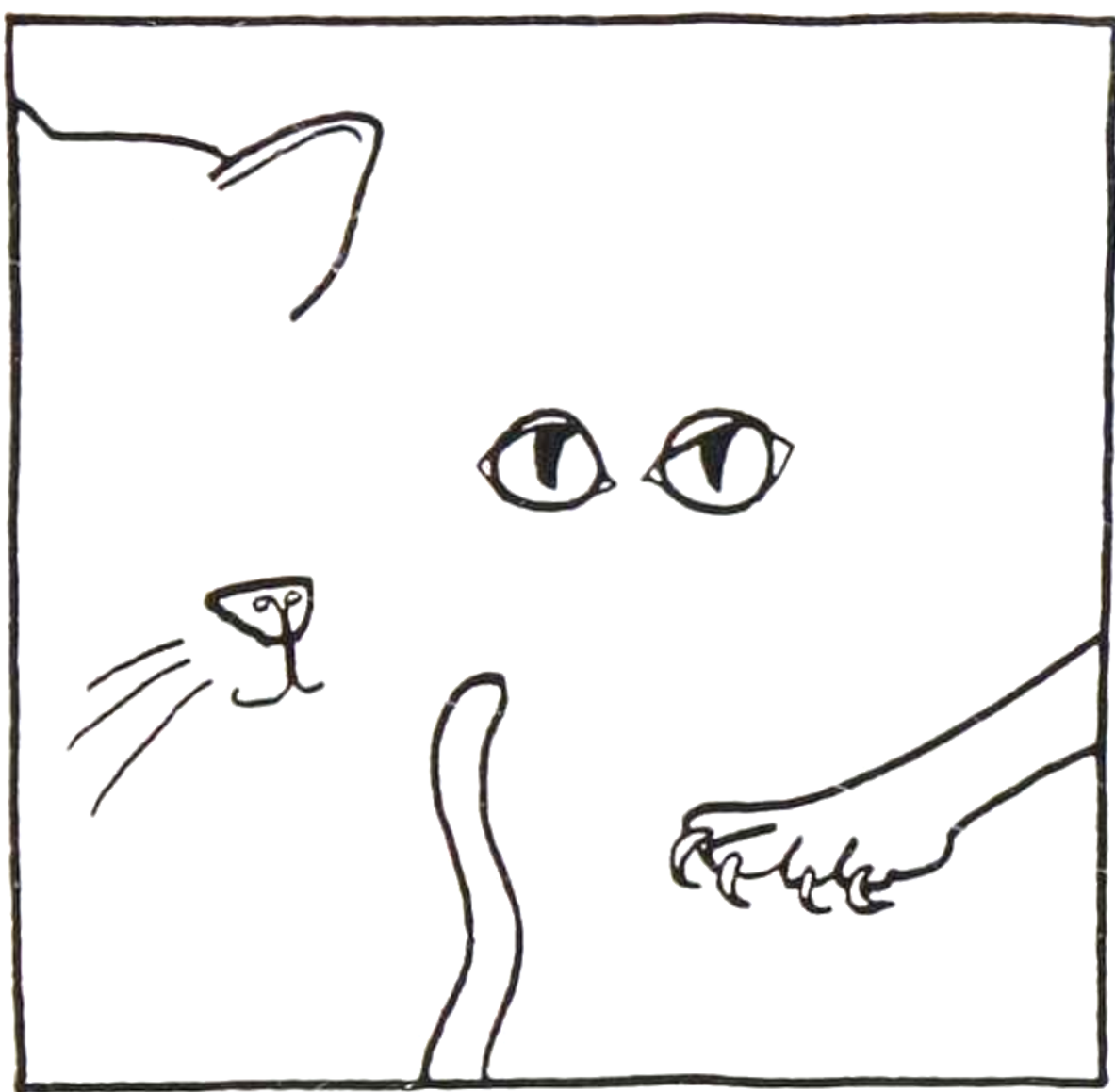




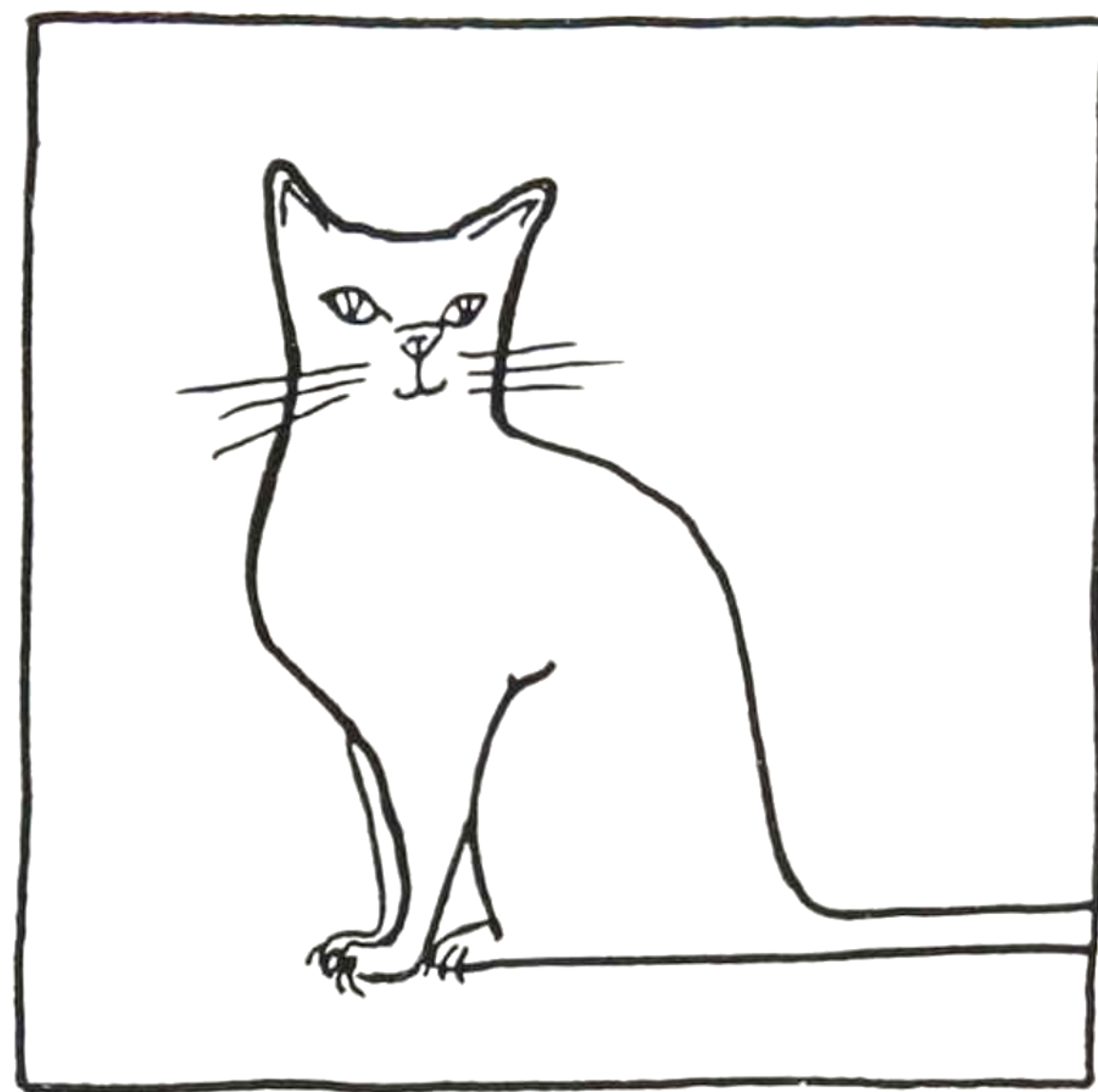
## VII. ELEMENTALISM AND NON-ELEMENTALISM

Korzybski used the term "elementalism" to label the procedure by which we separate out one or only a few aspects of complex, interdependent dynamic processes, and then pretend to deal with them "objectively" as independent or separate. He regarded elementalism as especially harmful in our semantic reactions because of its pervasiveness: he saw examples of Aristotelian elementalism in discussions of "body" versus "mind," "feeling" versus "thinking," "space" as separable from "matter" and "time," etc. (2, e.g., p. 105f)





ELEMENTALISM



NON-ELEMENTALISM  
A cat-as-a-whole.



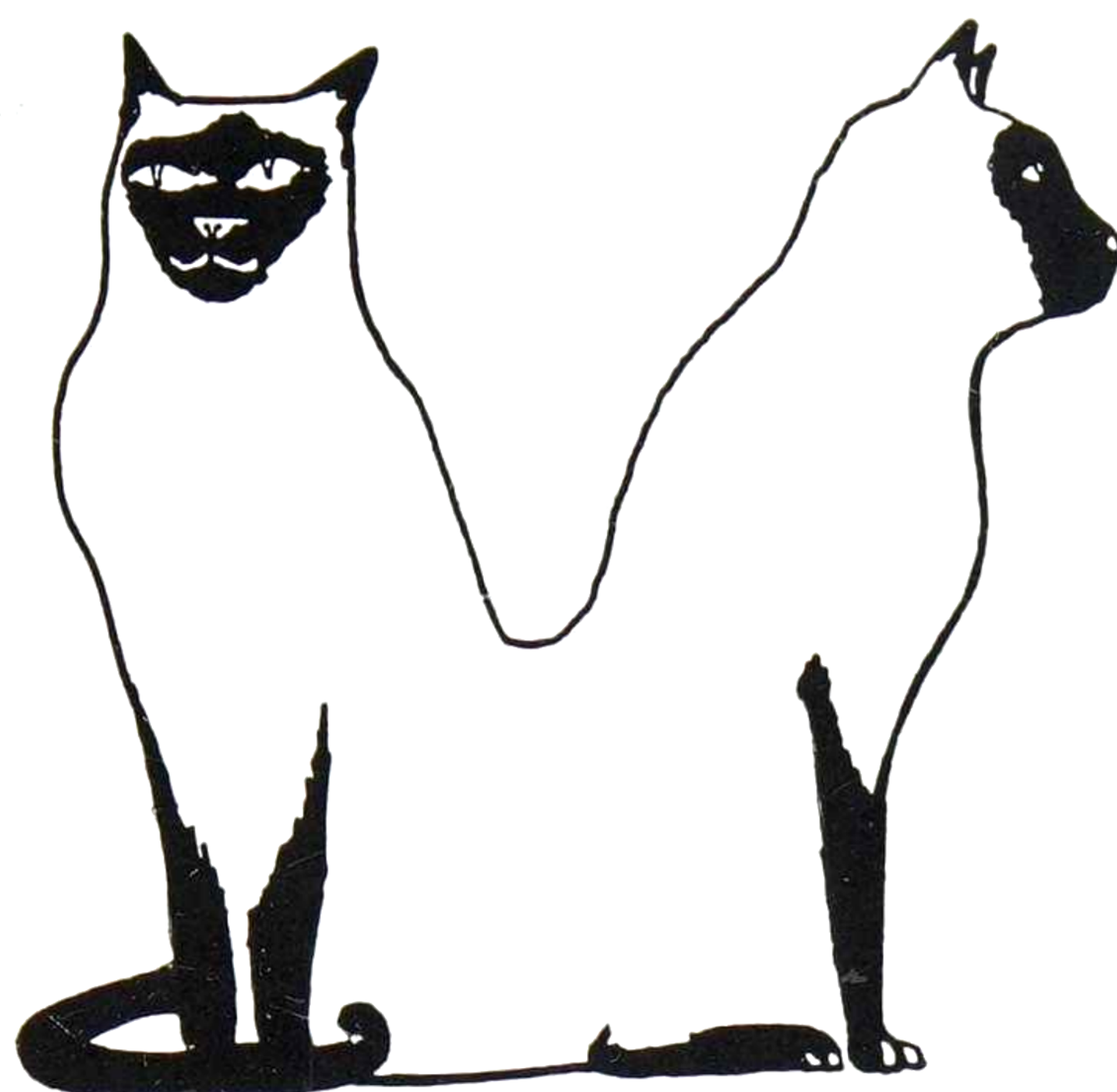
## VIII. MULTIORDINALITY

One of Korzybski's most important semantic innovations consisted of the discovery of the "*multiordinality* of the most important terms we have." (2, p. 14)

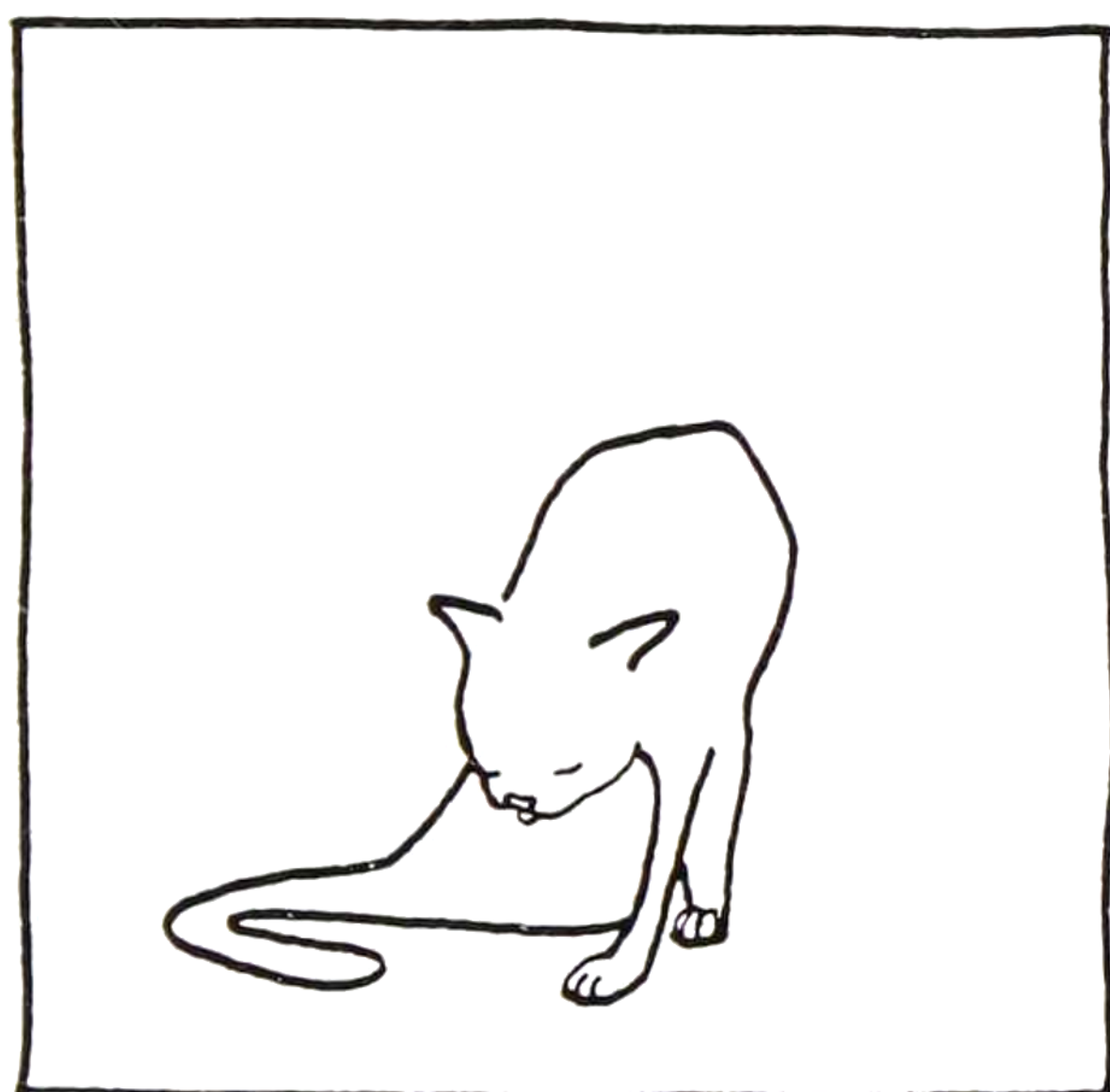
We have long recognized that humans use some words in such a way as to associate with them various meanings. Thus, we may have multi-meanings for a given term, while always remembering that the meanings reside in the semantic reactions of humans, and not "in" the term itself.

"Terms like 'yes,' 'no,' 'true,' 'false,' 'fact,' 'reality,' 'cause,' 'effect,' 'agreement,' 'disagreement,' 'proposition,' 'number,' 'relation,' 'order,' 'structure,' 'abstraction,' 'characteristic,' 'love,' 'hate,' 'doubt,' etc., are such that if they can be applied to a statement they can also be applied to a statement about the first statement, and so, ultimately, to all statements, no matter what their order of abstraction is. Terms of such a character I call *multiordinal terms*. The main characteristic of these terms consists of the fact that on different order of abstractions they may have different meanings, with the result that they have no general meaning; for their meanings are determined solely by the given context, which establishes the different orders of abstractions." (2, p. 14)

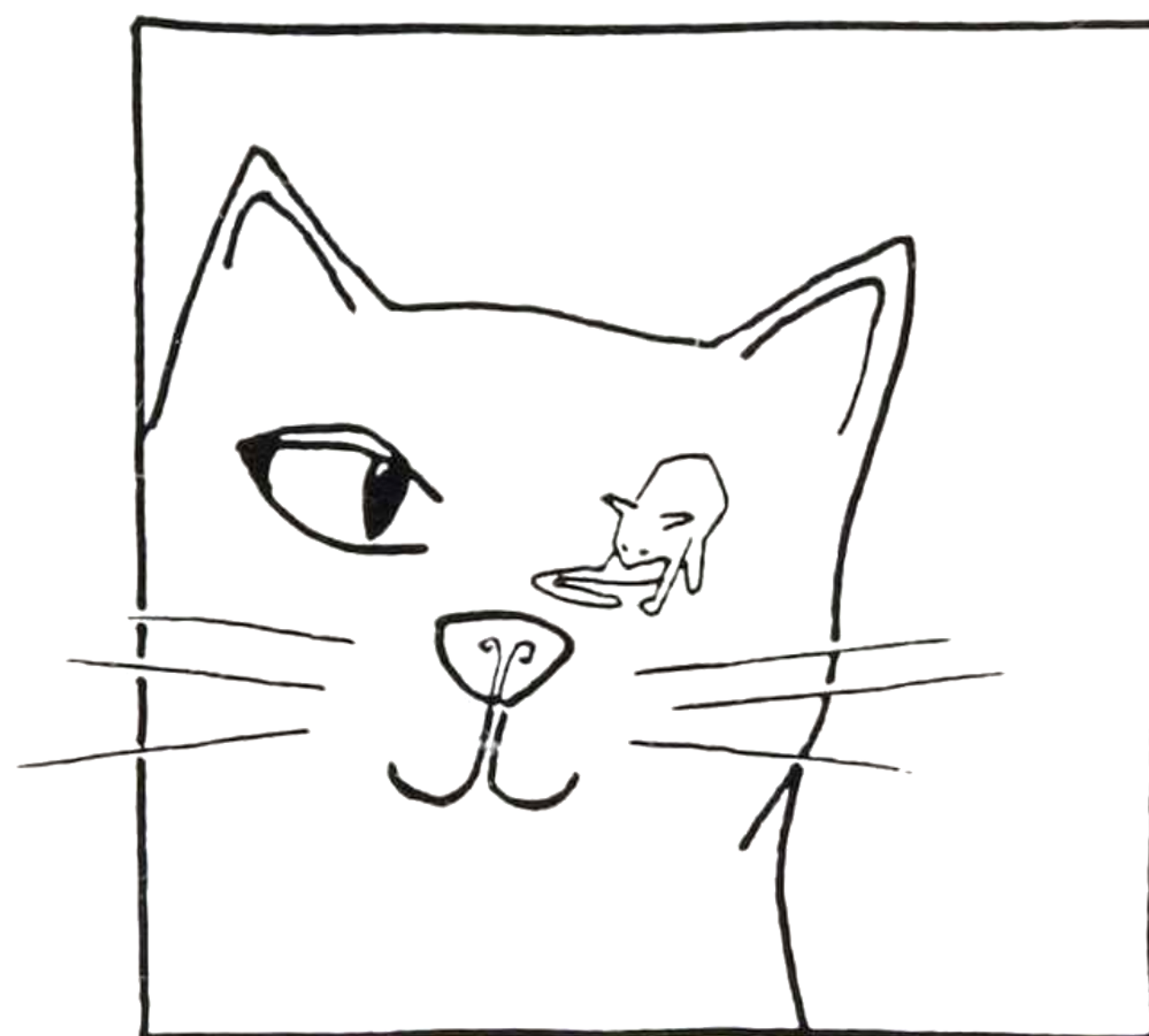




Multi-Meaning : Siamese Cats



A CAT.



A CAT OF HIGHER ORDER.

Multior ordinality

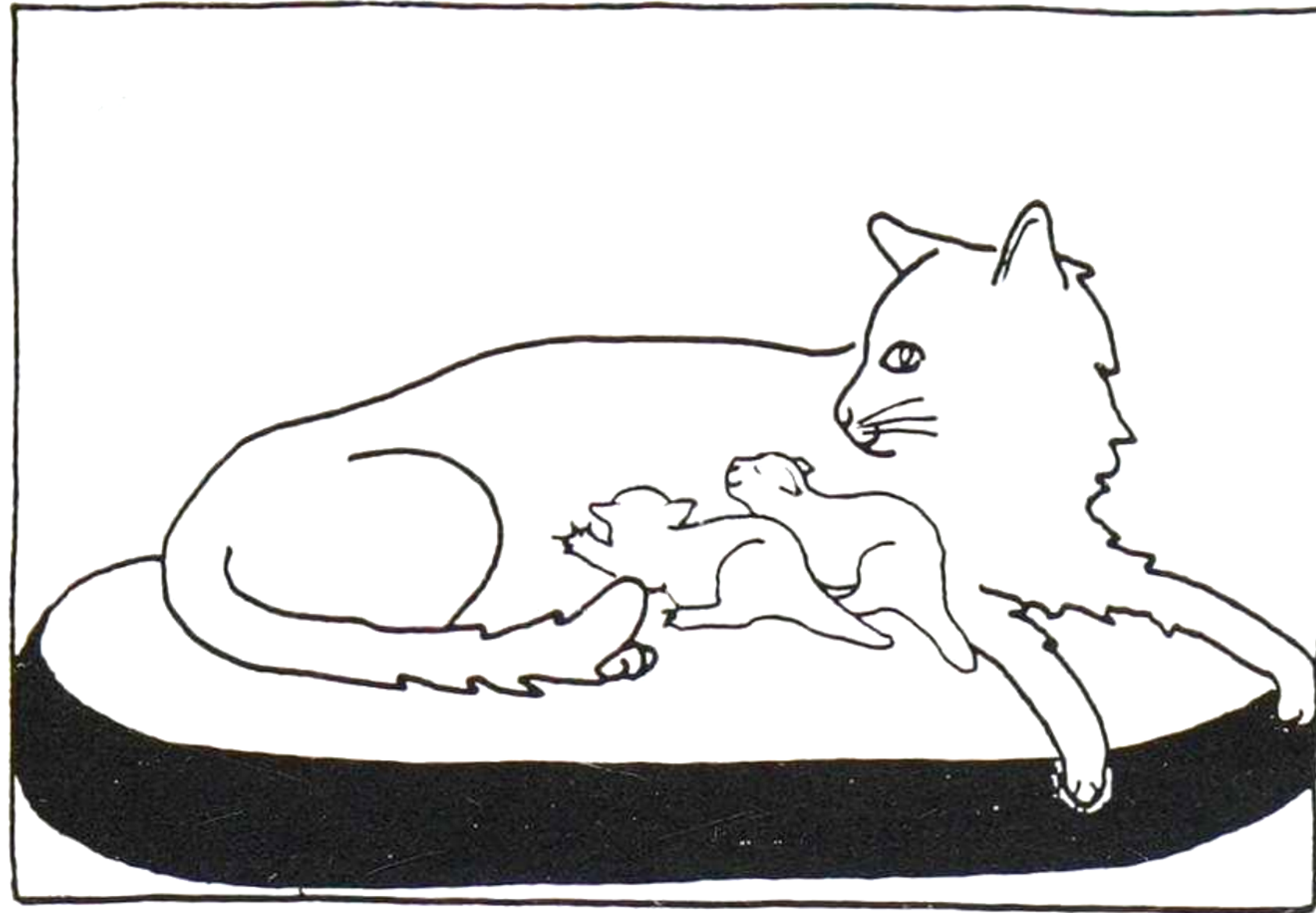


## IX. MULTI-VALUED ORIENTATION

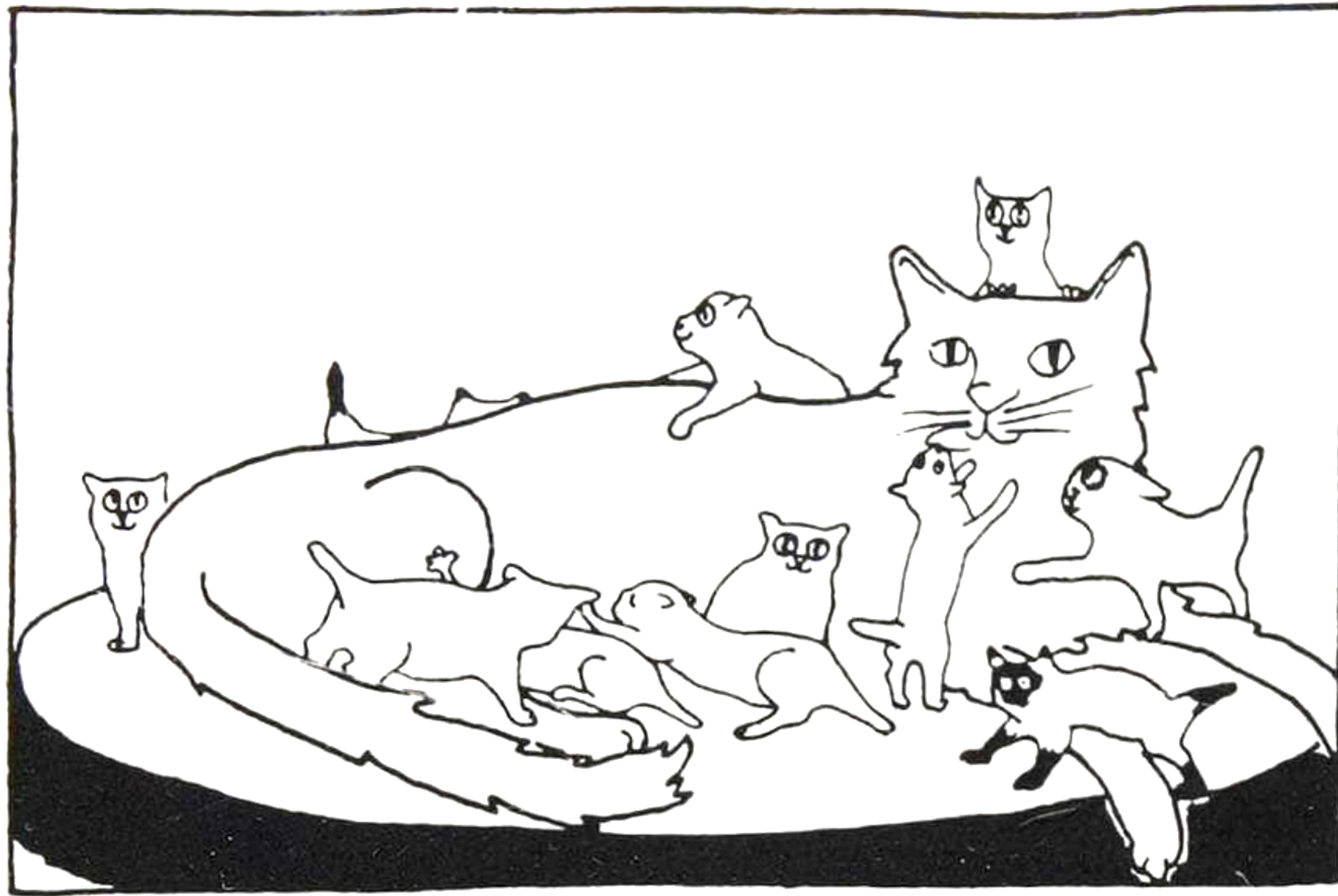
Apart from the wiggled index fingers to represent quotation marks, perhaps the Korzybskian innovation that entered the intellectual life of the United States most rapidly consisted of his drawing attention to the inadequacy of the Aristotelian two-valued orientation, frequently called an "either-or orientation."

Well recognized as a consequence of inflexible, dogmatic attitudes, this double-bedded Procrustian solution to the increasing complexities of modern life, this polar term approach (e.g., right/wrong, true/false, black/white, worthwhile/worthless, etc.) not only has proved inadequate in daily life, but also increasingly so in science as it unfolds in the late twentieth century.





TWO-VALUED ORIENTATION



MULTI-VALUED ORIENTATION



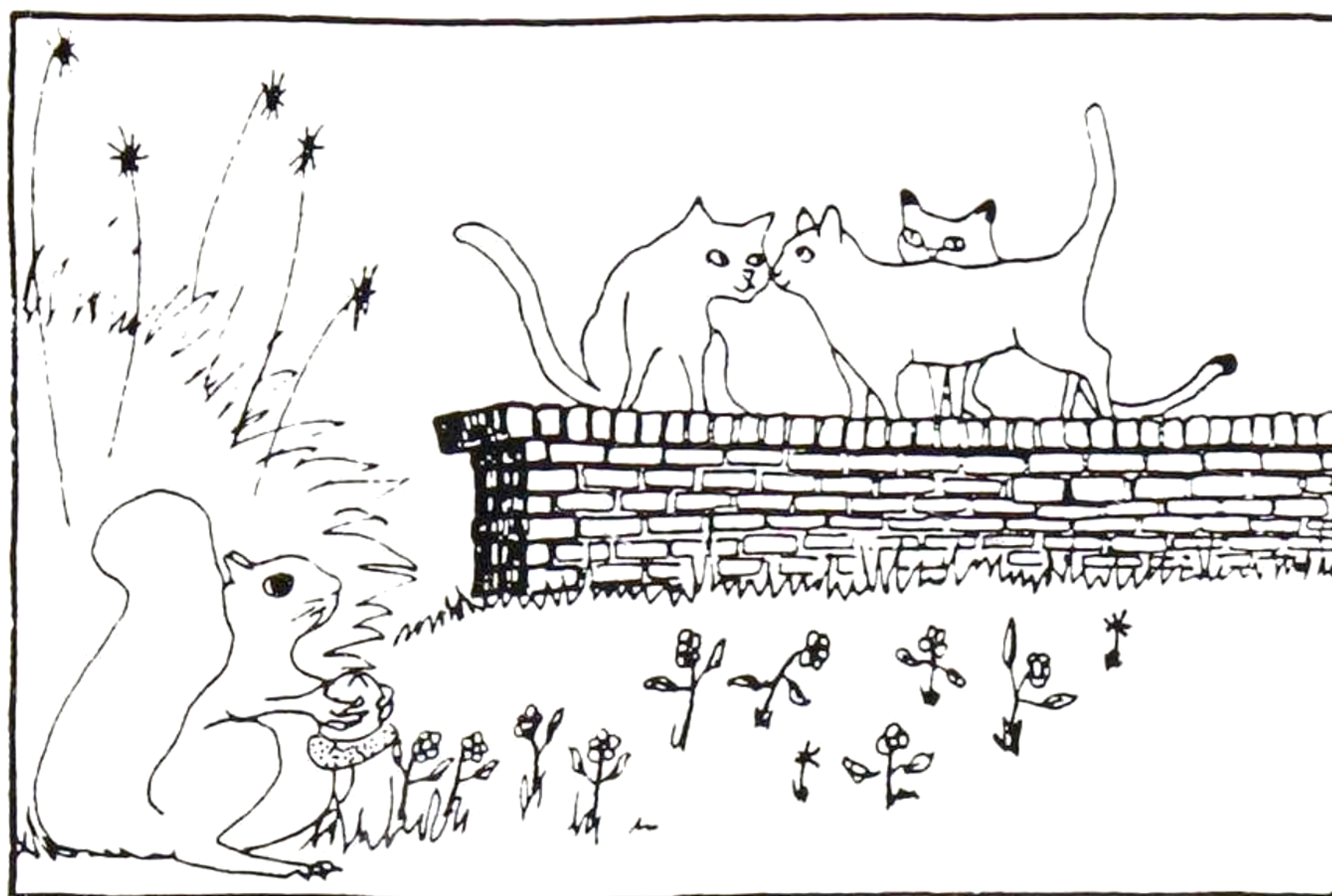
## X. EXTENSION AND INTENSION

In the opening lecture of Korzybski's recorded seminar given at the Lime Rock Lodge at the Christmas break of 1948, he stated, "In this seminar we will deal with the extensional orientation. Nothing but." By "extensional orientation" Korzybski referred to placing primary importance on the enumeration of individual members of a collection, or a relation "discoverable *only by inspection of the existent* ... only discernable by the *enumeration of particulars*." (2, p. 173) Sometimes we call this "proceeding by fact."

In contrast, the "intensional orientation" involves placing primary importance on seeking a "defining characteristic" or set of defining characteristics, "only discoverable by logical analysis," sometimes called "proceeding by definition."

Korzybski regarded the extensional approach, characteristic of science, the semantically proper one, in the sense that this attitude tends to prevent psychological problems. (2, p. 176)





ORIENTATION BY EXTENSION



ORIENTATION BY INTENSION



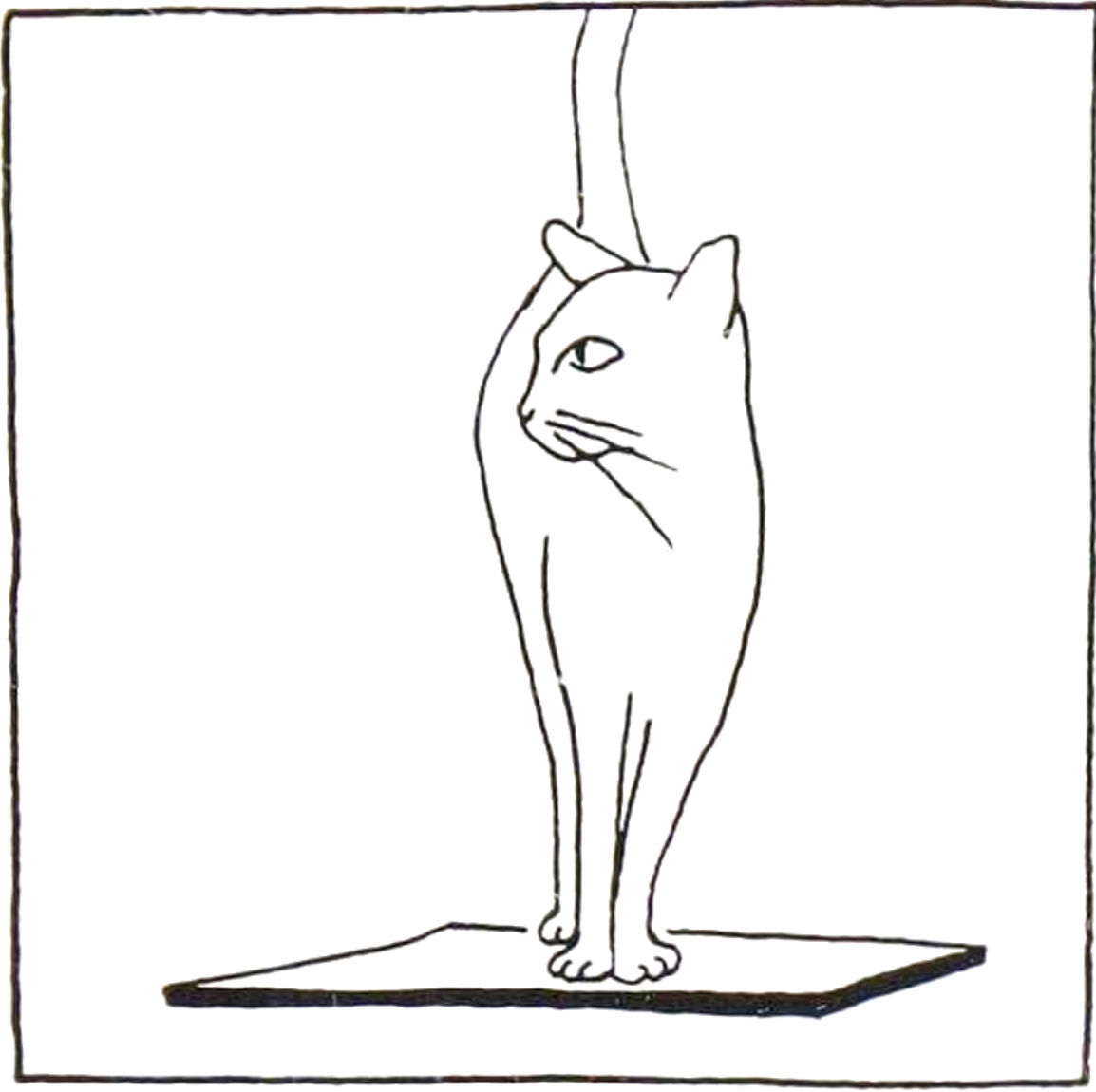
## XI. E, NON-E; N, NON-N: GEOMETRY AND PHYSICS

By rejecting the principle of identity, which lies at the foundation of the Aristotelian system, Korzybski opened the way toward a scientifically oriented non-Aristotelian revision. He regarded it as significant that the need to change a key assumption led to the change from *a* geometry, the Euclidean, to various non-Euclidean geometries, and from Newtonian to non-Newtonian physics.

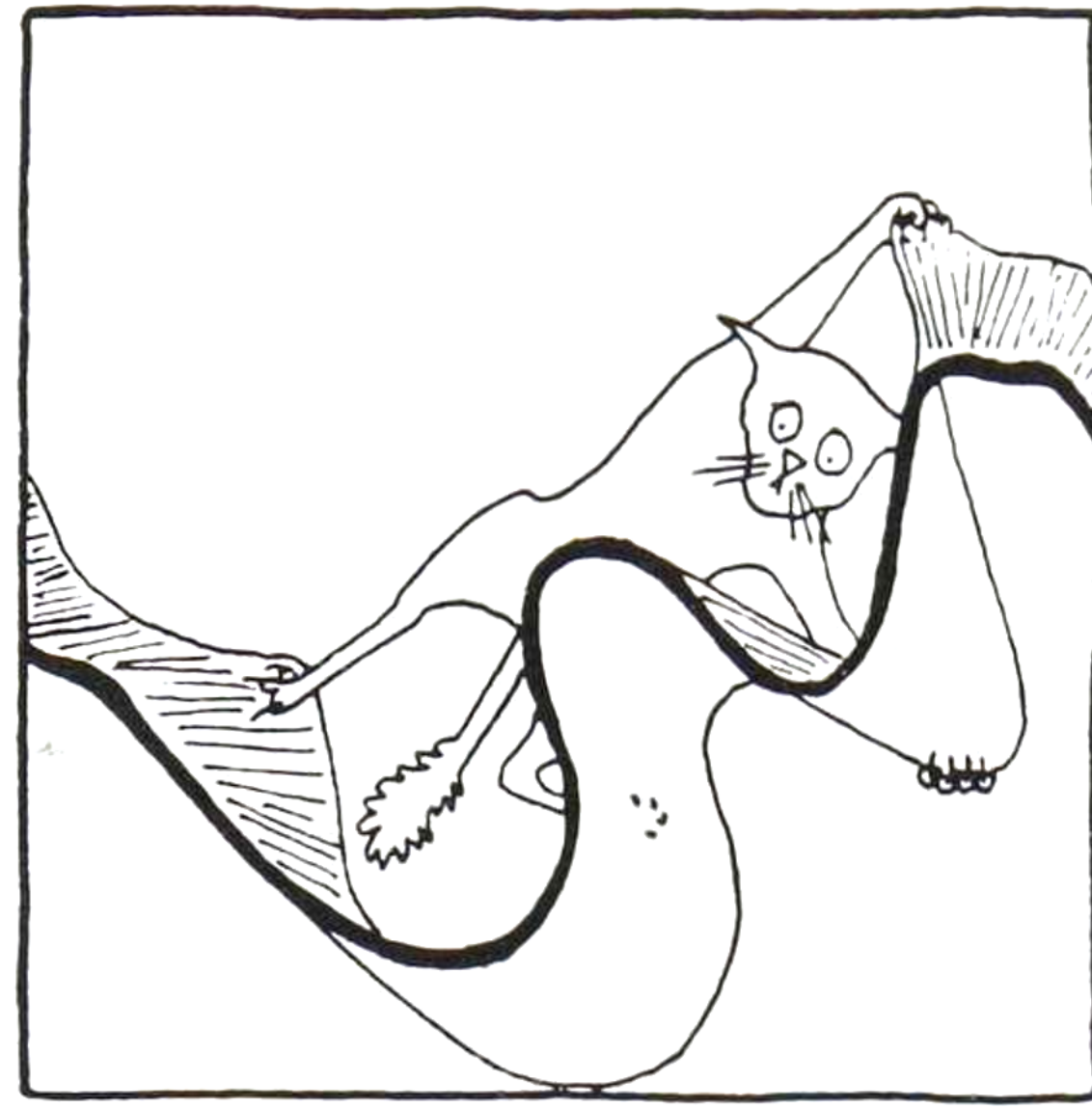
The key problem leading to the non-Euclidean geometries produced by Riemann, Lobatchevsky, Bolyai, and Gauss, concerned the famous parallel line postulate.

The key assumption that rendered Newtonian physics unable to cope with some experimental findings made at the end of the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth century involved a tacit assumption of the infinite speed of light. This played a role in various mathematical expressions, despite the fact that reasonably good estimates for the speed of light had become available by the middle 1700s.

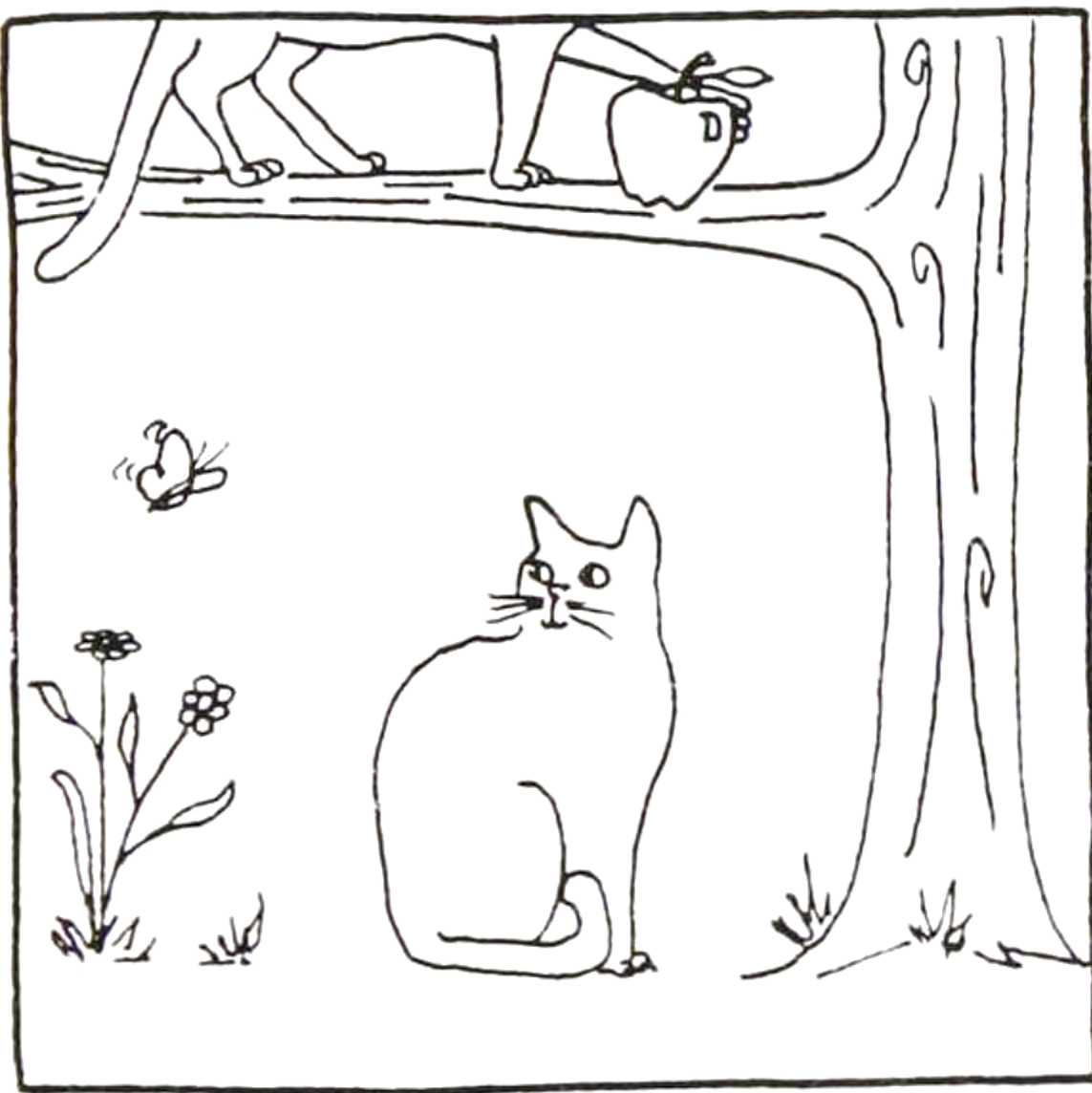




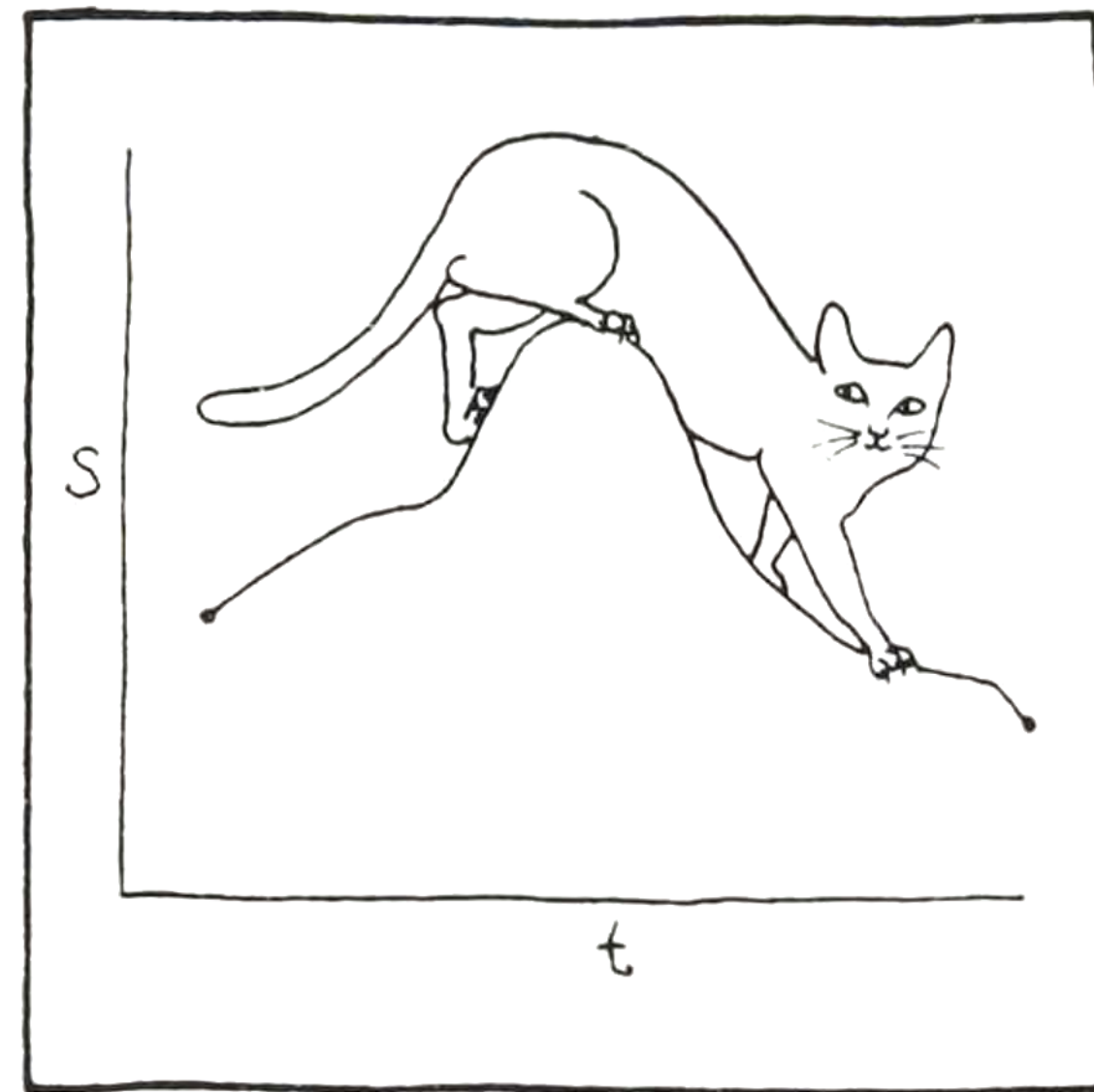
A Cat on Euclidean Space



A Cat in Non-Euclidean  
(Riemannian) Space



Cat with Newtonian Gravitation



Cat with Einsteinian Gravitation

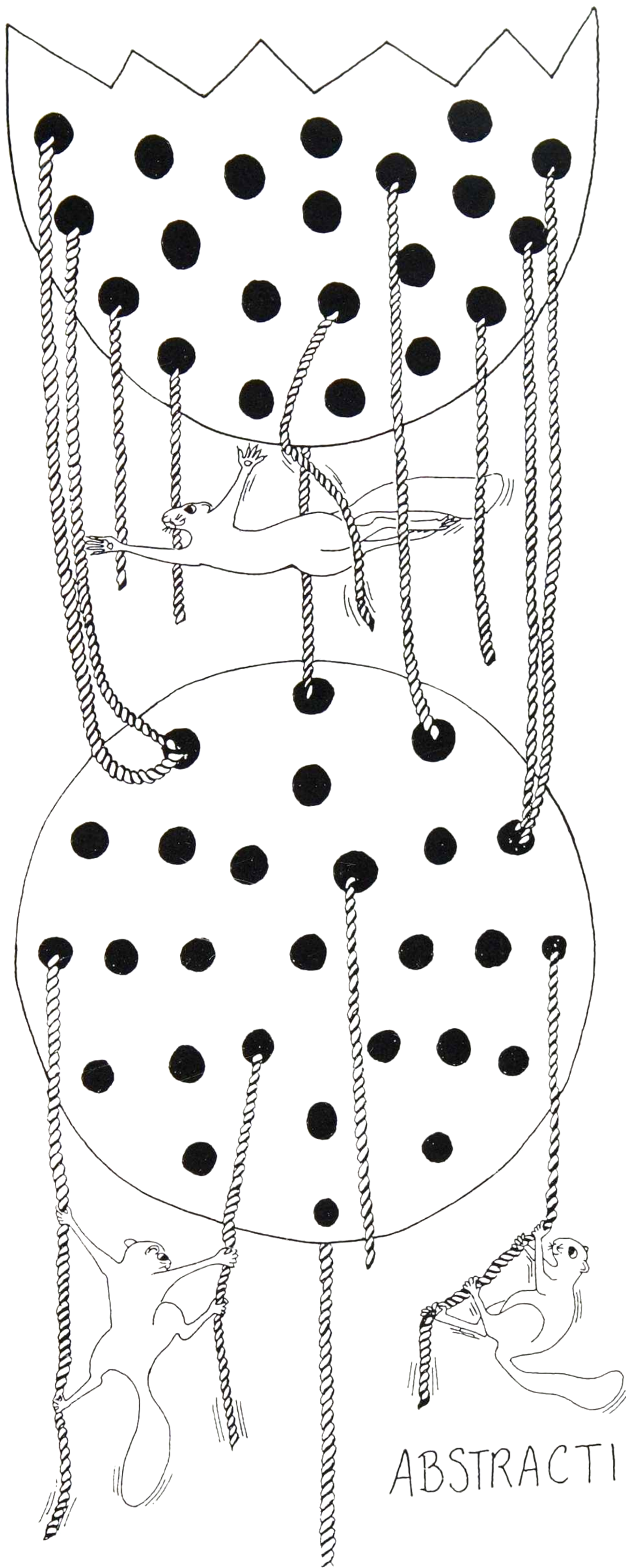


## XII. ABSTRACTING

Korzybski stated that, "The standard meaning of 'abstract,' 'abstracting' implies 'selecting,' 'picking out,' 'separating,' 'summarizing,' 'deducting,' 'removing,' 'omitting,' 'disengaging,' 'taking away,' 'stripping.' ... We see that the term 'abstracting' implies structurally and semantically the activities characteristic of the nervous system, and so serves as an excellent *functional physiological* term." (2, p. 379) Furthermore, he asserted that, "The term 'abstracting' is a multiordinal term, and hence has different meanings, depending on the order of abstractions." (2, p. 179)

Korzybski's *use* of the terms "abstraction" and "abstracting" seem quite straightforward: he used them to describe the procedure whereby we move from one level or order of abstraction to a higher one, leaving out characteristics in the process. (2, p. 387ff)





ABSTRACTING



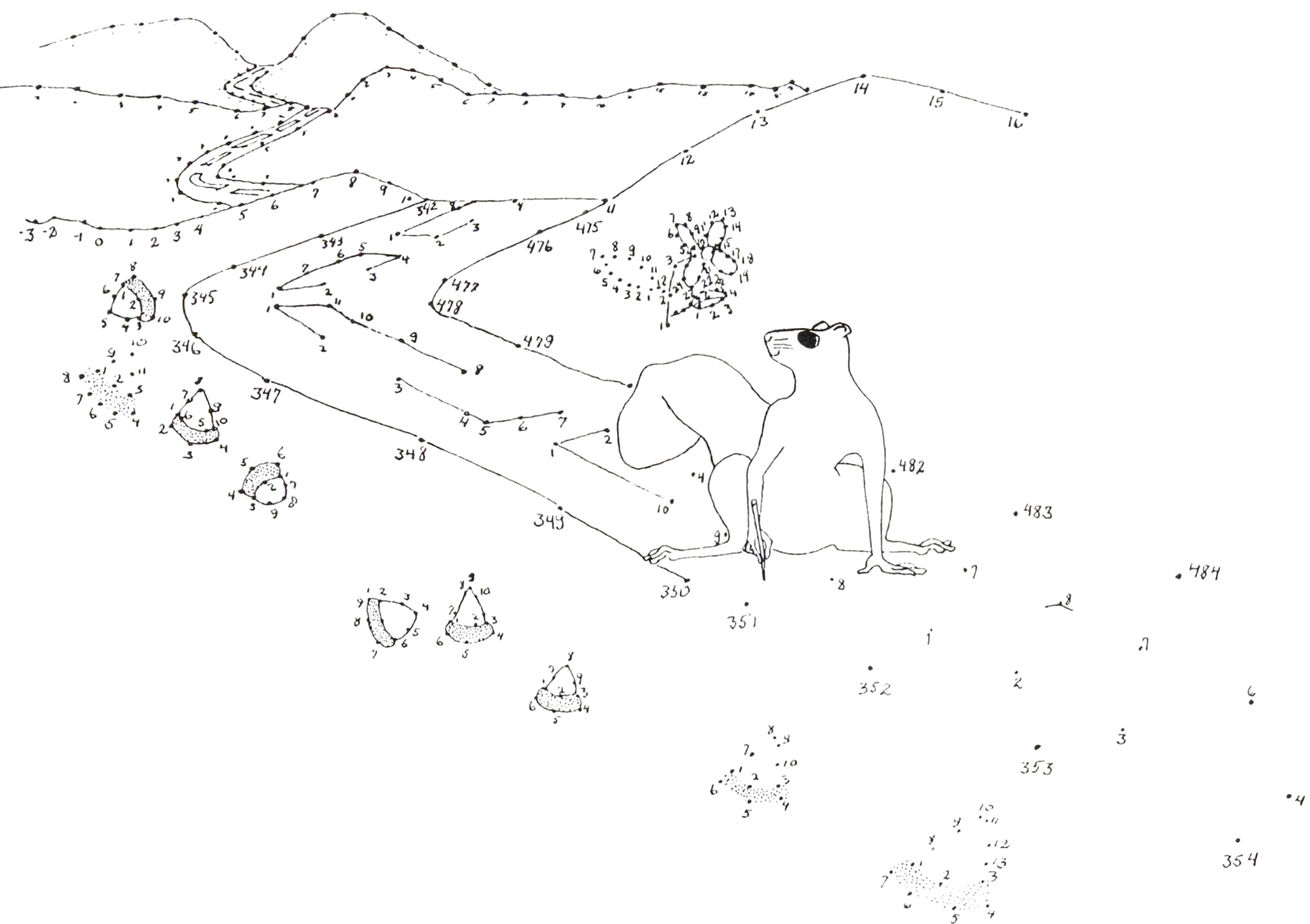
### XIII. CONSCIOUSNESS OF ABSTRACTING

"... the consciousness of abstracting, or the remembering that we abstract in different orders with omission of characteristics, depends on the denial of the 'is' of identity and is connected with limitations or 'non-allness,' so characteristic of the new non-systems.

"The consciousness of abstracting eliminates *automatically* identification or 'confusion of the orders of abstractions,' both applying to the semantic confusion on all levels." (2, p. 471)

From many viewpoints, the other facets, aspects, devices, etc., of general semantics have as their goal precisely this: *to foster a consciousness of abstracting.*







#### XIV. THE STRUCTURAL DIFFERENTIAL

Korzybski subsequently described the lecture situation during which, under intense pressure to produce a diagram that would clearly summarize his whole system, a diagram occurred to him "in a flash." He sketched on a chalkboard a part of a parabola, with a broken upper edge, to symbolize the event level with indefinitely great numbers of characteristics. This represents, for a given structure, the "extremely complex dynamic processes of very fine structure, acted upon by, and reacting upon, the rest of the universe, inextricably connected with everything else and dependent on everything else." (2, p. 387)

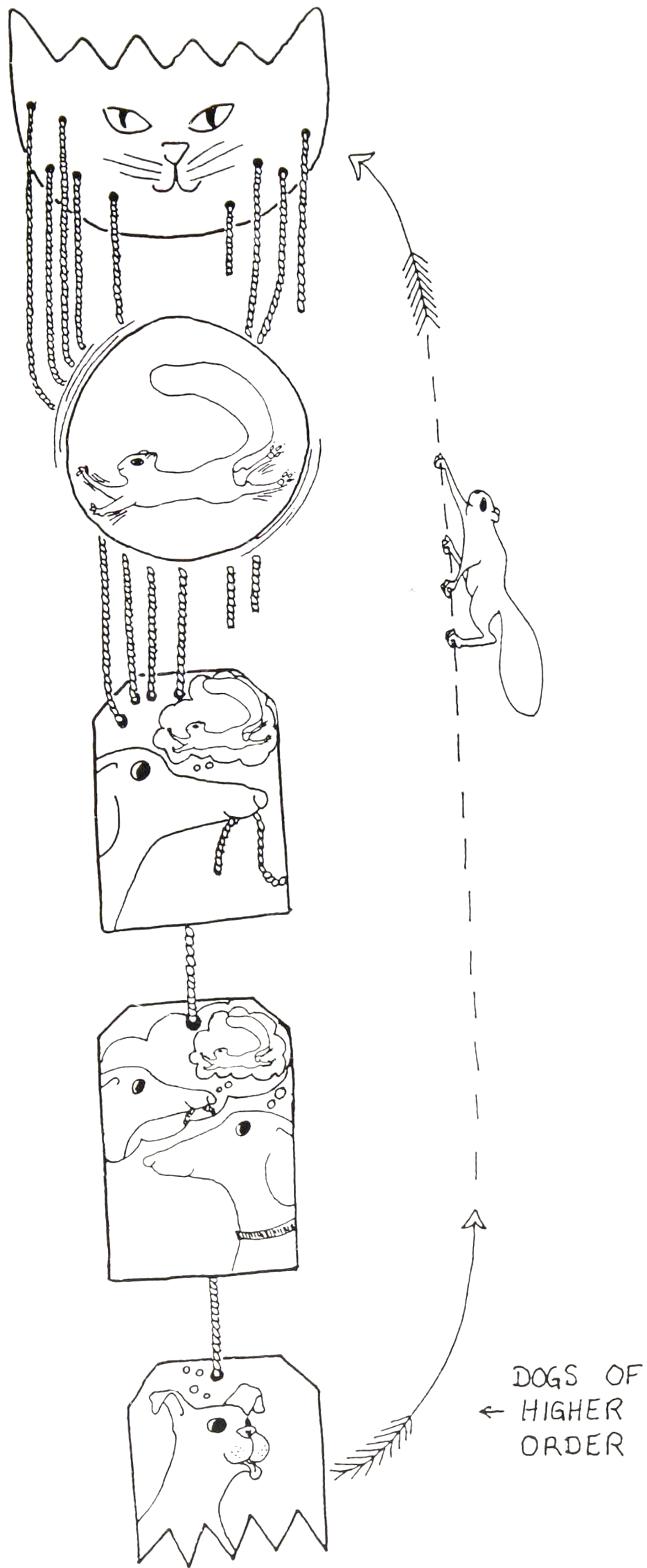
From that structure on the event level we abstract some characteristics producing the object level which we perceive, with a large but finite number of characteristics. Korzybski represented the object level by a circle.

He then indicated the symbolic level by attaching a number of "labels" to represent higher and higher orders of abstraction on the symbolic level.

Korzybski then included a final feature which some supposedly simplified versions of his Structural Differential ignore, leaving out an extremely important consideration. The "last" label, representing "the highest abstractions we have produced at each date" feeds back into and explains the characteristics of the event level. (2, p. 398, 399)

The Structural Differential provides a uniquely important training device which many have found extremely useful, even on a day-to-day basis. In fact, we have one hanging in our dining room for ready reference.





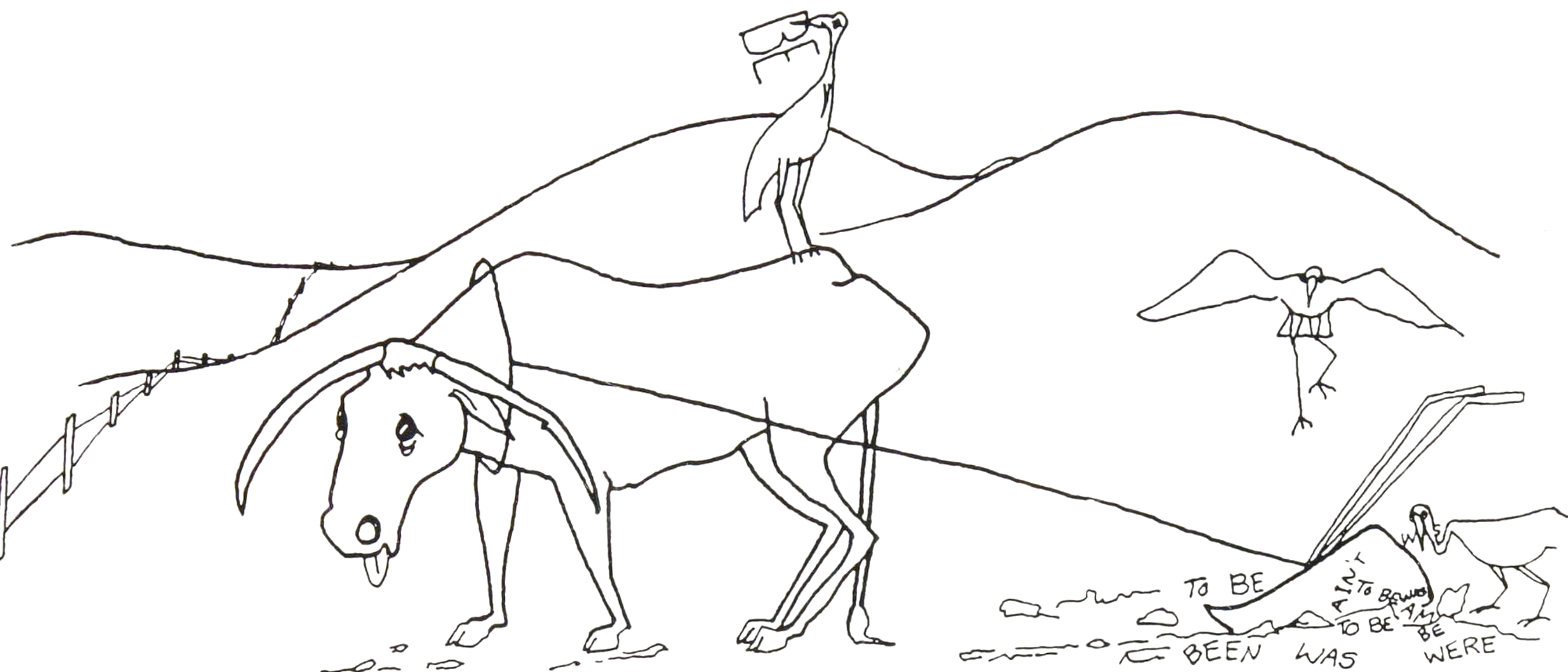
SOME STRUCTURES SEEM MORE DIFFERENTIAL THAN OTHERS



## XV. A FINAL NOTE

"To paraphrase Chaucer, advocates of any change in language habits plow a huge field with tired oxen." — Bob Wylie, former chairman of the English Department, Amarillo College.







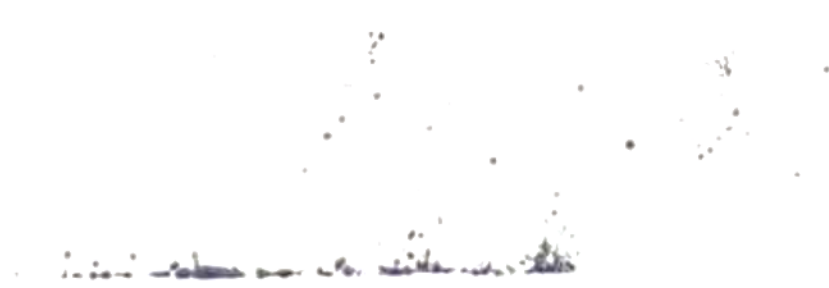




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4. D. David Bourland, Jr., and Paul Dennithorne Johnston, eds., *To Be or Not: An E-Prime Anthology*. San Francisco: International Society for General Semantics, 1991.
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